an Anthology

Sex Still Spoken Here

Edited by Carol Queen & Jen Cross & Amy Butler

Dirty Stories
and a how-to guide
from the
Erotic Reading Circle
at the
Center for Sex and Culture
in San Francisco

Sex Still Spoken Here
An Anthology from the Erotic Reading Circle at the Center for Sex & Culture

Edited by Carol Queen, PhD, Jen Cross, and Amy Butcher

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Dedication

To all the readers who've graced the Erotic Reading Circle with their words and erotic brilliance over these years

and To Good Vibrations for getting it all started

and To all the new Circles about to gather—may you celebrate the beautiful and complicated erotic experience with compassion, generosity, and kindness. Thank you for holding space for your own and others' creative erotic expression.

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An Army of Erotic Writers Cannot Fail: My Life with the Erotic Reading Circle

Carol Queen, PhD

I began to write in middle school. I journaled every single night when I was a pup, only stopping that daily practice when I went to college. But even there I wrote and wrote, now when the spirit moved me—and it moved me often, because a youth can always talk to herself, even when she doesn't have others to talk to. I filled book upon book with hand-written musings, analyzing and describing everything around me, everything that was troubling or inspiring or new. If you are not keeping a journal, my friend, please do—it is such an extraordinary gift to yourself, to take your own life so seriously that you make a book out of it, even if it's only for your own eyes … even if you never re-read it after you fill the pages. Years later I realized I had been writing the story of myself *for* myself, giving my older self a set of notes to help me make sense of my younger self, scattering breadcrumbs through a forest that, some days, was very dark and trackless.

Now I know I was also teaching myself to write. I never had a formal writing class, aside from those compulsory ones in high school. I didn't get an MFA, didn't apprentice to some amazing mentor, didn't go to Iowa or anywhere else. I just wrote, and read, and wrote, and the scritching of my pen all alone in rooms, or surrounded by the comforting buzz of cafes, comprises a great deal of how I built my future.

I'm telling you—pick up a pen.

Since it was *my* journal, there was a lot of sex in it, and that's what started me on the path of becoming a sex writer. (Even when there wasn't any actual sex being had, there was yearning for and thinking about it, the next best thing.) Once, on a BART train the week after the Loma Prieta earthquake had knocked down part of the Bay Area's freeway system, I sat my journal, in which I had been writing about (what else?) another night with Robert, down on the seat where I'd been writing, and gaped out the window—so struck by the damage was I that I left the train without it, and was so bereft that my raw document of new love and heady fucking was gone forever that I vowed I would go get hypnotized so that I could retrieve it, word for word.

(The guy who picked it up went to pretty extreme lengths to find me and return it. He left his card; he was a filmmaker, and to this day I keep an eye out in case the story of my life surprises me on Netflix.)

What I'm trying to say, I think, is that I mostly talked to myself for the first twenty years of my writing life. Until I found the Erotic Reading Circle. I visited it at least once in the 1980s, when I was new to San Francisco—just a few women crowded into the tiny Good Vibrations store on 22nd and Dolores. I think we sat on the floor. Some of them read their own writing; others got up, when it was their turn, to pull a book off the shelves, sharing someone else's words.

By the time I began working at Good Vibrations myself, I was just beginning to write for publications, in anthologies and 'zines. I soon took over the stewardship of the Erotic Reading Circle, joined by Jack Davis, the first man who came to work at GV. Wonderful readers flocked to the circle, too many to name—but just as exciting as hearing the opening pages of the piece that would later become Molly Weatherfield's BDSM novel *Carrie's Story* (take a back seat, *50 Shades of Grey*!) was the pleasure of hearing people who'd ventured in with their very first-ever piece of erotic writing. From then until now, a span of twenty years, it is still such a thrill to hear the initial words of someone's first-ever sex story—and a huge honor to be able to nurture them with feedback and appreciation.

We never know when a new person comes in the door what they'll read when they pull out their folded manuscript or their laptop. We cannot predict by looking at a person's apparent gender, age, station in life (and all of these are *only* appearances, after all—you cannot judge a book by its cover, nor the person who has written it), can't assume what fantasy or experience has flowered from their pen or their blinking cursor. It is the most beautiful opportunity to be reminded of the diverse experiences and identities of the humans around us, but also of their unbounded erotic imaginations. We spend much time in the sex-positive world decrying the role of shame and lack of information—but people find workarounds, and when they sit down to write, no matter where they came from, they may dive into surprisingly deep waters.

I don't know how many stories I've heard at Erotic Reading Circle gatherings—hundreds, maybe thousands. I have been touched by every one, moved by other Circle members' feedback, taught more about the craft of writing just from my co-facilitator Jen Cross's wise and loving observations

than I've learned from any other single place. (Except, I suppose, my journal.) At the Circle, we have created the kind of sexual world every single one of us deserves: one in which each of us has a voice, a unique array of experiences that make us distinct and valuable to others for our knowledge and perspective, and where we can come together in our wonderful difference and feel, at the end of two hours, that we built a new world together. You're holding a book in your hands that contains way more than just each individual author's erotic dream. You are holding synergy, and community. I hope it makes you feel that the possibilities, on and off the page, are endless. The Erotic Reading Circle has certainly done that for me.

—San Francisco, August 2014

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“My community for writing is the Circle”: A conversation about the Erotic Reading Circle

Carol Queen, Jen Cross, and Amy Butcher

JC: I think it would be great to go back to the beginning. Carol, I love hearing the stories about the beginnings of the Erotic Reading Circle. Who had the idea, what was the initial impetus around holding such a space?

CQ: The original Erotic Reading Circle was born out of the early years of Good Vibrations, actually, within five, six, seven at the most, years of Good Vibes having begun in 1977, little postage-stamp- sized store in between the Mission district and Noe Valley in San Francisco. As part of the after-hours programming, the Erotic Reading Circle started really to bring newcomers into the store. There were barely any books on the shelves yet. The publishing boom of erotica in the 1990s was years in advance and [Good Vibes] hadn’t even started publishing the erotica anthologies that Susie Bright and Joani Blank helped to put together and put out in the world. But it was, I think, the period that Susie Bright had already joined their staff. And so I can assume that she had something to do with it back in the day. I know that Stafford Kathy Winks was at the helm when I joined [the Reading Circle] one night in the mid-’80s, and, then as now, it was a small group of people reading aloud, talking a little bit amongst themselves about each piece. I think we do more of that than we did then. And we’re more likely now to have it be our own work that we read. In those days, it wasn’t always the writer herself or himself who came to share their work. It was some people who wanted to read erotica and be in fellowship around their love of erotica.

AB: Oh, interesting.

CQ: I joined Good Vibes in 1990. And it wasn’t very long before I put my hand up in the air and said I wanted to take over this circle. And for a while Jack Davis was my co-circle-convener, and by that time the anthology boom had happened, the zine boom had happened. No websites yet but we had a lot of writers—the writers that San Francisco is known for now, in the early mid-90s [they] would come to the Erotic Reading Circle and try out their stuff on each other. And so while it still wasn’t necessarily a writer’s own work that was shared, it got more and more likely that that was the case. [The Circle] went dormant for a little while, the very end of the ‘90s

or the beginning of the ‘00s, and then you came to town, Jen Cross. When we expressed interest in doing it at the Center for Sex and Culture, Good Vibes said “take it, run, fly with it.” And the rest is history that you’re part of.

JC: And you and Jack co-edited the first Erotic Reading Circle anthology.

CQ: *Sex Spoken Here*, a title that actually was cooked up by Lawrence Schimel who I did *Pomosexuals* and *Switch Hitters* with Cleis back in the ‘90s. From far away in New York or Spain or wherever he was he thought of this title and we went with it. At that point we had been doing the Circle for quite a few years and I actually can remember the moment that I knew that we had to do that anthology. There was one specific writer who came along and he read a story—and this is pre-Clinton and Lewinsky, I just want to say this as a preamble—he read a story he had written about a man and a woman who used cigars as a sex toy. Is it possible that Clinton could have read that story? I don’t know! But I heard it and it was so freakin’ creative. Mind you I already had my degree (or almost) in sexology and I thought I’d been around the block a couple of times and I was all … “Wow! We have to put that in a book.” So we did.

AB: And, Jen, how did you get involved in the Circle?

JC: I had come to San Francisco in 2002 to lead erotic writing workshops, was doing my practicum for my master’s degree and I was leading an erotic writing workshop for queer women survivors of sexual trauma. Of course, I knew about Carol Queen and I was a huge fan; we were introduced a few years later when I was hoping to come and use the Center to run a series of workshops there. I had found a copy of *Sex Spoken Here*, I think when I was at Community Thrift buying anthologies as research for my thesis, and [the Erotic Reading Circle] felt like something that should be happening in San Francisco and wasn’t. This sort of space should be available! That feels very bold, that I would have just said to Carol, “Is this something that you want to start doing again?” And she said, “Yes!” [After it got going again,] I liked to encourage writers who were in my workshops, who wanted to start moving their work out into the world, to come to the Erotic Reading Circle.

CQ: It’s a fantastic step in between …

JC: [To read aloud] any piece of new writing is really risky to do, [and it’s even more challenging to] read a piece that has to do with sex which is

[often, in other workshop spaces,] treated like it's *less than*, easy, ridiculous, and not offered the same merit as other forms of writing.

CQ: *And* presumed to be experientially-based when it isn't always, although sometimes it clearly is, and that's even more intimate and extraordinary, when someone brings something that we know is their own true experience, what an amount of courage it can take.

JC: And even for folks I think who are comfortable, who have maybe written a lot about sex and read often in the Circle and in other places, when they bring a new piece of writing, it's still really scary, it's still really risky, it's still sort of stepping into that same "oh my god, is somebody gonna laugh at me? Is someone going to think this is ridiculous? Is someone going to take this apart?"

AB: I remember coming to a Circle once where, um, you know usually there's somewhere between 5 and 15 people in the circle. And I came to one Circle and it was just the two of you and me. And this is early on in my coming to the Circle. And I read a piece that was one of the more vulnerable ones—it was a harsher piece than I usually write, there was no humor in it, there was nothing to protect me in that piece. And I read it to the two of you. And I was shaking afterwards, after hearing it, having those words come out of my body. But that was such an important experience for me and one of the things it taught me is that that shaking is when I know I've written something true. And so I actually look for that now. And I wouldn't have discovered that had I not had a chance to read aloud to the two of you and to larger groups afterwards.

JC: Feels like there's a somatic process happening right there. I would love to find the language for that. This is something we were talking about before, that there're these different pieces around engaging with a new piece of writing: there's the actual finding language for something, writing it down, putting it on the page, which is an extraordinary step for many people. And then there's that next piece of bringing it up off the page, like we have to embody the words in writing them down in the first place, whether we're writing by hand or whether we're typing it in, it's still moving through our bodies, moving through our physical experience. Whether we've done it before or not, I'm thinking how would that feel, and I'm calling on my own physical experience. And so it's this embodying process, or can be, to generate the work and then to sit in this space and

move it up through the page, up through our bodies so we can hold it in our throat, to hold the words in our mouths, and to move them through us in that way—and then we're also getting to say these things out loud that we're never supposed to say, that we're rarely encouraged to speak, even … it can still be so uncomfortable, even in private, even in sort of an intimate sexual experience.

CQ: Even to a lover, yeah.

JC: Yes. Right. And so you were talking about that a little bit before, about the power of that reading aloud.

CQ: Well, one of the things that I think is extraordinary about the Erotic Reading Circle, especially for people who read their own work, although what you just described of the embodiment and voicing of the forbidden, that would be true of anybody who walked through the door and took any book off the shelf here at the Center for Sex and Culture and started to read the sex words out of it. So that would be true, regardless. But the person who has written their own fantasy, experience, piece of work that they hope is art, whatever—to speak it, to read it aloud is a big deal.

JC: I wanted to rewind a little bit and hear how you, [Amy,] came to be involve in the Erotic Reading Circle.

AB: Actually, about two weeks before I moved to San Francisco, I was living in Boston and I took a writing workshop with Michelle Tea in Boston and then—I was not stalking her—but then followed her back to San Francisco and I think that was the first writing workshop I'd ever done and so I was like "Oh, this!" I got some good feedback and could feel my legs underneath me a little bit. [I thought,] "I need to replicate that, I want more of that" and so—like so many other things in San Francisco—I came here and [asked myself,] "OK, where's that workshop that will let me write smut and talk about it and learn about it?" And so I think I stumbled across it through the Center for Sex & Culture. I don't even remember what the first story was that I read, I'm sure it was quite tenuous with probably some fun things in it … I had these incredible somatic experiences of reading stuff, and crafted all sorts of weird, strange stories and felt like my weird, strange stories were accepted and so trusted my own voice a little bit more …

JC: Those dish gloves!

AB: Oh yes, "Dish Gloves to Die For." Yeah, I thought erotic writing had to be this very narrow sex-specific thing and that wasn't what I was writing about, so getting a chance to read it in the Circle and discover that that was OK liberated me to the point where now we have a murder mystery [*Paws for Consideration*] that has dungeon scenes in it, right? So all of that can be traced back to both the craft and the confidence building that's come out of being a part of the Circle. And hearing the other voices, too. So, that's what I remember.

What happens at the Erotic Reading Circle?

JC: One of the pieces that we get at the Circle is that you put your words out, and you get an immediate response from folks while you're reading, as well, so you get to hear where somebody thought something was funny, or people thought something was hot, or something was alarming … and then after we're done reading folks are telling us, "this was really hot for me" or "here's something that was really strong for me about this piece" … To have your work met with respect and received as a [worthwhile] piece of writing, to know that folks are taking it seriously, that they're saying "Here's what I really loved about it" and "Yeah, I really liked this character" and "It was hard for me to believe they would necessarily do this" and "I wonder about …" is such a validating thing for us as writers.

CQ: [At the Erotic Reading Circle,] we get this great mix of people who do write very seriously for publication, thinking about their audience, having been trained sometimes or just sort of being natural good or pretty good writers and then we get the people who just heard about the Circle and have this one thing and they think they'll come and read it. And to treat everybody just the same in that Circle to me is one of the miraculous things that we can do. I'm sure I can think of, well right now I can think of one person who is actively looking for publishing options for everything she writes that I'm pretty sure she walked in the door not being in that space at all, writing for herself, and now she's getting published and she's going to hit the "Best of—" collections soon if she hasn't already.

JC: That's right.

CQ: And that's so awesome to see and experience—but somebody who walks in the door having just scrawled something for their partner and their partner responded so well that they decided to come share it with somebody

else—it's so beautiful. The intimacy of that [sharing] helps those of us who really want to be craftspeople with erotic writing. It's a kind of a different craft—it's the same but it's also different than the craft of writing in general, right? You know you can do everything right in an erotic story and it may or may not have the investment of erotic charge that we hope it will have. And that's a sort of a special sauce; I don't even know if I can say how to put it in there but I feel like at the Circle we totally know it when we see it.

AB: And that it comes in such different packages, I mean it's not like you show up and everybody is reading a cigar story—the diversity of erotic expression just blows my mind, and that's part of why I show up as much as I can, almost every month, because like I never know what it's going to be. Is it going to be a sci-fi futuristic dystopian weird chapter 11 fascinating book happening? Is it going to be a movie script someone is working on? is it going to be something about an erotic dance as somebody's dying? There's such a diversity of erotic expression, it frees me to think all things are possible.

The uses of erotic writing

AB: [Carol,] you referenced that people are often writing either memoir or from their own experience or something—you know, I think one of the fun things for me is using erotic writing as a halfway step: "I don't know if I really want to do that thing, so I'm going to write about doing that thing that I've never done." To find the words I have to find it through my body so I will get to sort of test drive it in a really safe way, and then bring it to the Circle and read it and test drive it again in that way. And then I can decide if I actually want to go out and do it, or if the writing of it suffices on that occasion.

JC: Right on.

AB: I don't think I knew that about erotic writing, that it had this almost like psychological playground aspect to it. It's fun.

CQ: It's really fun. One of the things that's wonderful about doing it in San Francisco (although this is not to say that you wouldn't find this happening elsewhere, too; I don't want to privilege San Francisco in that way, although clearly it's true of here) is that you'll find four or five other people in the circle who are likely to have some knowledge about whatever it was you

[tried] and, depending on who they are, they'll tell you whether you tied the knot right in chapter 2 …

JC: Exactly.

CQ: Or you'll get a sense of whether you hit the mark for that particular kind of erotic behavior or space from the responses of people who already have that as part of their oeuvre or, best case scenario, you could find somebody to try it out with, but that's not ever really been the point. I mean, maybe there's been some cruising at the Erotic Reading Circle but it's so about the writing, it's kind of interesting actually. I can imagine in many other places that this would be the hottest game in town! We're valuing writing and erotic experience and erotic vision and language and all of the stuff that gets packed up in these pieces, more than anything. And because it has always been—and this is part of its history, too, and clearly part of its present—a place where people could be together in a group where they would maybe be the only person of their flavor in the group … it's kind of a teaching space. It's a sexual diversity appreciation space.

AB: Right. One of the things I love about the Circle is the norm of talking about the protagonist of the story, as opposed to [saying] "when *you* [did that] …", "when *you* said …" It's about what your *character* said, and so there's a certain separation that happens, and yet there's so many stories that I can still hear the person reading—it really matt to me that it was *that person* reading *that story*, and I don't know if it was about them or not and I don't really care if it was.

JC: And it makes room in the space for this breadth of what erotic and erotica can be, right? That we can have this diversity of voices and this diversity of subject matter, and that *each writer* can have such diversity of voices … that the erotic can embody so many different parts of our lives, that we can have such a variety of emotional responses, too, which gives us lots of permission as writers [and as erotic beings.

CQ: Erotica is a genre that's getting a little—I'm not sure "respect" is exactly the right word, but attention, clearly. And it's getting so much attention that everybody's going to be doing it now, who knows, but I don't know that I've seen our groups get bigger and bigger and bigger since *Fifty Shades* or anything like that. What I do feel like I see here is the way that the Venn diagram of erotic content meets all the other genres.

JC: Right. Yes, yes, yes.

CQ: Like the night of the gay zombie story, I thought to myself, "A gay zombie story!" Of course. Our first ever gay zombie story here at the Erotic Reading Circle. Maybe I said that out loud. But there's something about what the other genre will bring, how it reveals each kind of writing in a different way because it's a mash-up of two things that might be distinct in other libraries … here the erotic is part of virtually everything that gets read at the Circle. Or at least sexual commentary. We make it sound like it's all fiction and memoir, but it's essays, too, sort of sexual philosophy, it's that one guy who was writing a how-to book based on his experience as a medical doctor. I mean there's so many different pieces to what we can do [at the Circle].

AB: As you've been recounting certain stories that have been read, and I'm remembering those, it makes me feel like the Erotic Reading Circle is like live theater. It's a moment in time, people come, they share a story and then, you know, they may go away and we many never see them again. This anthology [is] an interesting snapshot, basically some fabulous writing that's happened in the Circle, [though that] doesn't fully capture the experience of the Circle.

JC: Something we'll invite folks to do as they purchase the book would be to hold your own Circle, or hold a salon, invite your friends, invite folks right into your space and think about reading these pieces aloud, because all the pieces in the book re-embody the Circle.

What can the Circle hold?

CQ: A circle is a lot of things. It's a shape of holding, going all the way back to baskets and pots and things that we know from archeology … it's also a spell. It's a spell, it certainly is a pagan spell, there's no question about that. But, you know, I can think of other spiritual entities that always met in a circle. And there's something about that [that connects with] the degree to which we're making sure that we give each reader respect.

JC: Another powerful piece of the Circle is that we don't put any restrictions on what people can read about. [We don't say,] "Don't bring this kind of writing, or this kind of erotica, or this topic." Folks have brought risky, edgy, dangerous content, stuff that makes some people really uncomfortable even to sit with, stuff that can really push our [personal or political] boundaries. And what does it mean to receive *that* work

respectfully as a piece of writing? To respond to it, giving our authentic open response, not knowing what's autobiography, what's fiction—making space and engaging with it respectfully is a powerful gift of this Circle. And it's a really tender place.

CQ: And surprisingly few people that we've known of, I think, have not found that to be congenial or have found anything threatening enough that they felt like they needed to leave. I mean, we don't always know why people go and don't come back, but I can only think of one person that I know for sure who got triggered [and couldn't return]. I can think of a recent piece of writing that was edgy, that the writer of it said, "I'm trying to determine how edgy this is by bringing it here," and let us become part of that decision-making process. It's like a self negotiation, isn't it, to know when you walk in the door that you might have something that you don't want your name on or that you are not sure if it's going to fit into an anthology or maybe it's a little non-consensual for that or whatever it might have been. And asking, "What's here that I need to keep, what's here that might be negotiable? Talk to me."

Starting your own Circle

JC: Let's say there's this group of folks who would like to get together and start their own Erotic Reading Circle in their town. How would you describe the "ground rules," the practices of our Erotic Reading Circle as we've envisioned it here at the Center for Sex and Culture?

CQ: I'd say that everyone is welcome to read their work or others' work, to listen, and that everyone is welcome to give positive, supportive, thoughtful feedback. Know that anybody who ever puts pen to paper, or clicks or touches their gizmo or whatever tomorrow's technology is of making creative writing happen, already has a whole world of people behind them saying you shouldn't speak up, you can't say that. Even if they're not writing about sex. I mean everybody has had somebody in the world probably tell them they should shut up. And we want to do the opposite thing for the members of the Circle and encourage them to speak up, to write, to get it going. And I think almost everybody who would ever come to such a thing as an Erotic Reading Circle gets that. I think once we say that kind of opening—the preamble that you almost always say, Jen—I think people get that right away. Oh, we want to make this a safe space.

JC: I think what I invite us to do is remember that at the Erotic Reading Circle we have a real breadth of understanding of what the erotic is and so folks can be invited to bring material that is of all different varieties and contents. That we want to keep readings to about 10 minutes. That we really want to listen intently and attentively to each other's work. And [pulling from the Amherst Writers & Artists method], we request that if folks have specific kinds of feedback that want to receive from the room to let us know. That otherwise we really default to saying what's strong for us, what we like about a piece of writing. Especially if it's a brand new piece of writing, I encourage us not to think about how we'd critique it, because [the writer] has those voices already in their head telling them what's wrong with this piece. It's really helpful to get from the room that other side, to hear about what's strong, what's working in the piece. Also, that the writer can come with specific questions ("I'm really wondering how this voice is working"), so when we're giving more critical feedback the writer is really driving that. We can say, you know, "you wondered about if this is hot," so we can give pretty immediate response to that. And so I feel that's what I … what else do I say? And I like the specificity around wanting this to be a safe space and wanting this to be a space where folks feel ready to take risks. That it isn't actually always comfortable—it's often not comfortable—but we can sit with discomfort and we can hold each other in it and we can hold each other's writing in that, which I think strengthens us as writers and also as folks in the world that we get to do something risky like this and be met with kindness and generosity, which is something you were talking about earlier.

AB: And I love the simplicity. It could sound like those are very simple instructions, yet I think all of those very simple things create the safety. One could overlook them easily, but I think they're incredibly important to the potency that comes from creating a strong container. For somebody trying to set up their own Circle, even though those things sound simple, don't not do them. Because they're actually critically important.

CQ: Another thing you say often is "What stays with you?" You know so even if it's just the vibe of the story, if it's one particular element of the story, it helps people figure out what they've got going on to build on if that's what they're choosing to use their time at the Erotic Reading Circle for. I think that there are different reasons that people walk in the door. People come in to use this as a writing workshop-like space. I think there's

no question that people are using it for that purpose, but that's not the only reason at all. Some people are doing it because they're scared, some people are doing it because they're really proud of their piece of writing and they're being kind of exhibitionistic about it—"I've just gotta share it!"—and every once in a while somebody will come in with something that's just brand new and they're all "Woohoo!"—they're all excited about having just finished it and that's kind of sweet. And I think some people come to the Erotic Reading Circle just to be in a sexually diverse space.

JC: To be in community.

CQ: That there is a real powerful thing: that it's personal but can be kind of anonymous, that it's a special zone. It's not exactly like any other zone of sex positivity or sexual diversity or whatever. It's not exactly like anything else, it's unique.

Making space for erotic art

CQ: As Dorian [Katz], our gallerist, keeps pointing out about the art show that we have here, you think that these amazing artists would just put the stuff in any gallery show with the other art that they make. But other galleries don't always accept it. You'd think there'd be many, many more places for this kind of art—you know, everybody's at least a little interested in sex, aren't they? A lot of creative people have some sort of sexually related work that they've done. Whether they're established and known creatives or whether they're Henry Darger in Chicago in his room who didn't get a museum until after he was dead. I mean, there's a lot of juice in the sexual for a creative person and the idea that many people can't ever find a place to take that creativity, that just makes me really sad. It's one of the things about being free enough in San Francisco to have created more than one cultural space for sex-related art making. That's one of the things that helps make San Francisco San Francisco. It's because we have so many voices that we feel like it's safe to come out and add our own, I think. And the Circle makes that happen in miniature.

AB: Yeah, for sure. And it, you know, you use the metaphor of an art space and there is this beautiful [art show] up right now that unfortunately the reader can't see but I think if you took any one of those pieces and put it in a show with all the "normal" pieces then it's going to get held out as, "Oh, that's the sex piece," and so it doesn't get looked at as a piece of art work in

the same way. And so when you come to the Erotic Reading Circle and *everybody's* reading erotic stuff, it's not just like "Oh, my god, you wrote an erotic piece." Instead, [the response is,] "Oh, huh, let's look at your erotic piece in context of these other erotic pieces," and now that's a whole different conversation. It's a level of witnessing that can't happen elsewhere.

JC: Right, folks will describe being at other, more traditional workshop settings, where other writers are so pulled out by the content—"Oh, my god, this is a piece of writing about sex!" or, more supportively, "It was really brave that you wrote that piece about sex!" That can be really powerful and generous feedback, yes, but sometimes we would like more than that. Like, what was it about the piece that was working? What did you think about these characters? Sometimes folks in a more traditional workshop setting can't drop down beyond "These people are having sex!" In this space—I really like how you articulate that, Amy—in this space, ok, there's lots of sex happening in all these pieces and so how are we engaging with them as legitimate works of art? How are we talking about this? How can we help this person with their craft? Being able to get a different quality of response feels really important.

Many times people are bringing, you know, a piece of short fiction, a blog post, a poem, that is a fully contained piece and it's erotic—that's part of the point of the story, is that it's a piece of erotic writing, right? And then other people are working on larger works of fiction and are using erotic interaction as a way to develop their characters, to kind of give us more information about their characters, which I love. It's such a powerful way to explore more about a particular character. Who are they interested in? How do they have these conversations? There are folks who wouldn't necessarily consider themselves erotic writers who would be welcome in this space. Maybe they don't consider themselves genre writers, or erotic genre writers, but still would like to have some space to workshop or engage the erotic content in their writing—there is space for that as well. You don't have to call yourself an erotic writer to be welcome in the Circle.

What comes of participating in the Circle?

JC: So, if we were going to think about some outcomes, what has been the result for folks of the Erotic Reading Circle? I mean, readers can get some more information about that from [the mini interviews that accompany]

each of the stories but there certainly have been folks who come through either the first incarnation of the Erotic Reading Circle or this one, who have moved on to greater heights. I mean Amy, you're absolutely one of those folks! You wanted to find a place to share your work and then you've been published in *Best Lesbian Erotica* and you have a novel published (award- winning!), and then you have another one coming.

AB: Yes, that true, and I think the confidence I gained from the Circle, and especially around giving voice to what seemed like taboo things to me, that opened up just a whole world of possibility—yeah, I don't know that I would have done any of those things without the Circle actually, for real. For reals.

CQ: And I'm thinking of my comrades at Perverts Put Out and remembering how many of those regular readers had their moment or two, at least, at the Circle. The person that stands out for me the most as an Erotic Reading Circle alum is Simon Sheppard who has become such an important gay erotic writer, sex essay writer, curator of Perverts Put Out lo these many years. And when Good Vibrations was at 23rd and Valencia, he lived right around the corner and so always, always came to the Circle. And there were a number of gay men in those days who were part of the Circle who sort of drifted away. But one who used to come who we see at almost every Perverts Put Out now is the great Horehound Stillpoint, whose long-form prose poetry is amazing.

AB: The two of you are both quite accomplished, widely published writers —how does the Erotic Reading Circle, as you're a part of it today, affect your writing? Does it support you in any particular way now?

JC: I have often brought new writing in to the Circle and it's usually work that I had generated at a workshop that I'm bringing out into a room of new ears; it's helpful for me [to share the work with] folks who are coming from different experience, different points of view, who are not necessarily like me, who are going to be receiving it from a different point of view. That's really helpful for me as a writer.

CQ: And I don't read very often at the Circle any more partly because there are enough people who attend that I don't want to take somebody else's spot. And partly because I'm not doing a whole lot of new writing, especially new creative erotic writing myself right now, although the past couple of years, the work that I've done that has meant the most to me has

either been with Kirk Reed's Biggest Quake Project, which had a little bit of the Erotic Reading Circle to it in a way. I mean not necessarily mindfully, but he had a group of people who worked together and shared pieces—the greater project was to write AIDS memoir, but we sort of used that group in the way that we use the Erotic Reading Circle sometimes. Also, the piece that I contributed to this anthology is a piece of recent writing that came from a memoir writing workshop that I was sort of co-scheduling along with the Erotic Reading Circle. That's where this piece was generated, and I polished it at the Erotic Reading Circle. It meant a lot to me to have the space to do that. You know, some of us have gangs of writing buddies, at least sometimes. And I don't really have that because I don't have enough regular writing time and space. My world is so full of other responsibilities. So when I do have that, it's so important to me—I think that I can say my community for writing is the Circle.

Family and erotic writing

AB: So has your Mom read your erotic work?

JC: I don't know! I have a feeling that my Mom has, my sister might have, and my father [doesn't]. And I am totally fine with all of their boundaries around my writing.

CQ: My mom died before I got very far out into the world as an erotic writer and so I'm pretty sure that she never did read my stuff. I'm not positive that she never did, though. She could have been a zine subscriber from the adult care center, you never know. You never know until they tell you or until they start acting really weird to you at Thanksgiving.

AB: I had a scene in the mystery novel that's a tour of a dungeon and when my mother read the mystery novel she called me up and she said, referencing her husband, "Derek was wondering … he found that section a little off-putting, and then he was wondering how it was that you might know about that material." So I was like, "Well, first of all it's a work of fiction and a writer must do their research."

JC: That's a good answer.

AB: That shut her up at that point, but I actually loved that sort of indirect outing of myself to my family.

CQ: I'm trying to remember where this phrase came from. It comes from my feminist readings from the 1970s and I can't remember to whom it

should be attributed now, I'm sorry person—especially if you ever hear this—but it was, "You must not even think those things." I think it was in the context of lesbian lives or some sex somethin' somethin'. Back in that day there were so many fraught topics—of course, it's not that they're not all fraught today in many contexts, but, you know, if you're going to write a piece of erotic anything you've got to step across that line and to the degree that there's a baseline boundary that much of the culture still kind of believes in, at least for some stuff, then [writing sex] takes the bravery of going into the sometimes very un-catalogued space that is the erotic mind. We don't really get respect for everything being all neat and tidy in there. It's a jungle partly because the culture *wants* it to be a jungle because then maybe we won't find all that stuff. What's all in there? I think it's *all* in there.

JC: I'm excited to read this interview just to have that quote! [laughter all around]

Final question

AB: So, since we're talking about eroticism: if you were a sex toy, what sex toy would you be?

JC: I can only really think about the small little pocket rocket vibrator that takes one little battery, that goes anywhere, that lasts a thousand years. I can go to all sorts of other exciting, interesting [ideas], but this is sort of foundational, you know: steady, ready when you need her, that's me.

AB: Love it.

CQ: Designed for pressure point stimulation, but now it comes in pink. And for a minute there they made it with a Hello Kitty! face on it.

AB: Oh, my god.

CQ: I'm not sure if its the exact right answer to the question but I'm just going to go there. And that, of course, is to the Magic Wand. Old school, plug it in, unless the power goes out it'll keep going. Sometimes it will overheat but you won't mind. And the other thing I want to say about that is that it's got two speeds, of course.

AB: Yes, it does.

CQ: So you can do the basic speed and then you can do the *rrrrrr* higher speed. And I think it helps to have more than one speed in one's writing. I

think there are those moments when you really do want to ramp it up.

JC: Yes!

AB: Lovely, connecting it to your writing. I like that. I believe I would be a butt plug.

JC: Oh, keep going with that.

AB: And I think I would be a butt plug because it's cozy—I like containment, that feels good to me, but there's a way in which it's so getting to the root of the issue, the unconscious material, the stuff that's maybe ugly and that we've tried to make it go away and just won't and I think that is an incredibly rich place for writing to begin from, so—

JC: Nice.

AB: —I would be a butt plug.

CQ: Muriel Rukeyser says, "the useful shit that is our clean clue to what we need."

AB: Aw. Nice.

CQ: Yup. It's a great poem. "Despisals." Everybody run, you can see her reading it on YouTube this minute. That's what's so good about the future – bringing the past to life on YouTube. Crazy! Who would have predicted it?

AB: Nice. Thank you everybody.

JC: Thank you. Thank you.

CQ: Phew.

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“Settle for
Settle for nothing
Settle for nothing less
Settle for nothing less than

Settle for nothing
less than the
object of your
desire.

Desire. The weight of. The weight of our
desire. Then laugh, cry, but laugh
more than you cry, and when you hold
the world in your hands, love Her.”

- *Alma Luz Villanueva*
The Object (*excerpt*)

Sinclair Sexsmith

Bio

Sinclair Sexsmith, known as the "kinky queer butch top," is an erotic coach, teacher, and writer who produces Sugarbutch Chronicles at sugarbutch.net. They travel frequently to perform and lead workshops, and to work with people one-on-one for identity puzzles and sexual experiments. Sinclair's work is published in more than twenty anthologies, and they edited *Best Lesbian Erotica 2012* and *Say Please*: *Lesbian BDSM Erotica*. They are an expert of strap-on technologies, a feminist Dominant, an identity puzzler, a classically trained poet, and a sacred intimate.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? Writing and sex have always been intertwined for me, probably partly because I came of age sexually in the early 1990s when the Internet was beginning to be more accessible, and because I'm a poet and the exact perfect word for something gives me a serious boner. I only think it differs from non-erotic writing in that it is not afraid to delve into the carnal parts of bodies, desire, and relationships. So much happens in our sex lives that is so relevant to our characters and our story movement forward, so it is often incredibly relevant.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? Reading pieces aloud always gives me a different sense of how they work metrically, how the meter flows, how the pacing of the paragraphs run, how the sentence lengths vary or are too similar or too different, and of course how actual people react to the content. Are they laughing here, holding their

breath there***?*** Having a group that can handle sex and erotic content is key to getting accurate feedback. I've taken erotica pieces to writing groups that weren't explicitly for that content and have received skepticism and giggles and some praise, but not much actual feedback on the craft.

What's the inside scoop on your story? It was written for a "contest" I ran on my website where readers submitted scenarios for a story (basic characters, plot, setting) and I chose which ones to write up and fleshed them out into full-length stories. This is one of my favorites, one of the "finalists"—and, one of the best-loved erotica pieces on Sugarbutch.net.

Girl in the Red Dress

Sinclair Sexsmith

At first I'm trying to ignore her. I have a good book, *Best Lesbian Bondage Erotica*; I have my iPod on to some soothing lofi mix; I have lube in my pocket for a quick jerk-off session before we arrive in New York. I need all the sanctuary and release I can get before returning to that hyper-stimulating city.

But she's making a big show of her many bags, heavy, designer luggage, and she—being a tiny petite thing—seems unable to slip them all into the overhead luggage rack.

The only other person in this car is a man in the back who has been snoring since I got on. I think about telling her to just leave her suitcases on the seat next to her, but her jaw is set, her sensuous mouth twisted in a sneer, and as she begins to climb onto the train seat to reach the rack better, I sigh and, reluctantly, get up to help her.

"Please. Let me," I say, sliding behind her and putting my hand on her waist to guide her out of the way, then taking the heavy suitcase out of her struggling grip and nudge it onto the metal rack easily. She's got a great ass in those tight jeans. Her eyes are wide, then she drags her gaze along my arm to my face. I watch her watch me. She looks like Penelope Cruz, all dark hair and big pools of dark liquid eyes.

"Um," she says. "Thank you."

"Don't mention it," I answer, a bit dismissively, now offering my hand so she can get down. The train doors buzz and are about to close, we'll be in motion shortly. I pick up her other bags and one by one put them up into the rack above her seat. She takes off her thin white sweater and sets it with her handbag next to her, and watches me.

I groan a little with the weight of the last one. She notices. "Thanks again," she says, and I detect a slight accent, French maybe, though she looks Spanish. Her words are a little airy, already pulling *Vogue Milan* out of her purse and turning her attention to it, a tiny sideways glance at me to see if I'm still standing next to her, waiting for my good-dog biscuit.

I retreat back to my aisle seat. We are facing each other, opposite sides of the train. She is absorbed in her magazine. I put my feet up and crack open my book, start reading through the bondage stories. She takes out a compact and lipstick and fusses with her mouth, repainting, touching her

fingertips to the edges of her lips, then wipes microscopic flecks with a tissue. I don't watch her, but she periodically sweeps her eyes over to me. I rest my hand on my neat little package as I read through the story by Toni Amato, "A Girl Like That:"

> *She's the kind of girl who brings out the worst in me. Coming on all hip and cool and all into sex, rubbing some part of herself all up against me every chance she gets. I'm not saying all the things my people taught me about women are so great, but I'll tell you what, where I come from, that kind of girl is called a cock teaser.*
>
> *It's like there's this small thing, like those stars they talk about, those White Dwarves, sitting deep and low in my belly, and this girl comes along, doing her number, and that son of a bitch just goes nova.*
>
> *She makes the worst part of me want to do the best it knows how to teach her a thing or two about fucking.*

I'm stroking my cock unconsciously through my jeans when I notice someone looming next to me, and it's her, she's returning from the bathroom with a clutch in her hand, I didn't even notice her get up. The girl smiles, almost, and pushes past as though I am taking up the entire aisle, or maybe to show off her gorgeous ass in those tight, tight jeans.

The train lurches and opens its sleepy doors, the man in the back of our train car is moving at half-speed and makes his way off the train.

We're alone.

She notices, too. She's looking out the window but keeps stealing glances at me. The conductor comes through and says nothing to either of us, just takes the small pieces of paper on our seats, the remnants of our tickets.

I go back to my book. I finger the bottle of lube in my pocket and think *this would be a good time to go rub one out*, then get absorbed in a story about a dyke cop who is passing as male in a straight club, picks up a girl and takes her, handcuffed, out to her truck. I nearly reach my hand into my pants.

"Um, excuse me?"

She's standing, still in her seat but leaning forward over the seat in front of her, facing me, ass tipped to the side, front of her button down revealing creamy skin, long dark hair swinging. She smiles when I look up, flashes me an intentional smirky pose that she has practiced in the mirror—

her seduction look. “Would you help, I have to … I need … something from that bag.” She glances up at it.

I put my book down and tug at my jeans to cover my hard-on.

Clear my throat. “Sure.”

I get up and move toward her. She kneels and reaches for it, her back to the aisle as I come up behind her and reach up.

“This one?” My mouth is close to her ear.

“No, not—yes, that one,” she says as I touch the smaller suitcase. She reaches up to help me, bending slightly forward, as we both ease the weight of her bag down onto the seat. And I swear she rubs right against me, pushing back, just a little. Maybe I’m imagining it. *Yeah*, *sure Sinclair*; *you just happen to have a boner and this girl offers up her ass on a silver platter*.

I back off. Return to my seat. Again. “Um, thanks!” she calls.

I toss a half-smile over my shoulder. “Don’t mention it.” She pulls a bundle of fabric out of her bag and I don’t watch. I don’t pay attention. I can’t see it. I shouldn’t be watching, but I am. It is slinky and red. She finds a few other bits and tucks her hair behind her ear, gathers an armful of clothing, makes her way toward me, down the aisle, to the bathroom at the back of the car.

She’s in there a while. I try to concentrate on my book, to not wonder what she is doing, what she’s slipping into, who she’s meeting when she gets off the train, not to imagine *being* that somebody so filled with lust and permission that I’d fuck her right on the platform, couldn’t even control myself long enough to wait until we went to dinner, drinks, a show, whatever it is she’s dressing up for. My breath is quickening and my hands are starting to do that aching thing where they are pulsing with grip, wanting to hold push grab press punch slap.

She makes her way back to her seat like the aisle is a runway, like she’s coming in for a landing. Each step deliberately placed. Legs precisely angled and separated and her gait is sharp, strong. Her red dress swings from her hips, past her thighs, to her knees. A few bracelets jangle from one arm, simple and slim. She’s pulled her hair up high on her head, into some sort of ponytail, then twisted around itself in a beautiful knot.

I watch her as she closes the distance to her own seat. I don’t drool. I am not drooling. I try not to drool at the sight of her ankles, her calves, the hints of the backs of her knees as her dress swings. I wipe my mouth. Her

ankles cross just slightly, which makes her hips curl and switch like a figure eight. Like a come-hither finger.

I swallow. Breathe in. And quickly open my book, flustered, and turn it to the page I was reading as she slides onto the train seat and I snap out of my spell.

Of course—of *course*—I am too zealous and the book slides out of my hand, skittering out into the aisle. I take a sharp breath in and some spit goes down the wrong way, I start to choke, cough, loudly, as I jump up to retrieve the book.

Oh good lord. I get ahold of myself. Straighten up, book in hand. Clear my throat. I don't look at her. I can't see her. I am sure I am five shades of crimson and I steal a glance her direction, she's covering her mouth, that perfect smirky smile, eyes dancing, looking away from me. Obviously she saw everything.

Fuck.

I resettle. Book in lap, adequate breath in lungs. I sneer to myself. Re-open the erotica. *Do you have to be so obvious*? I yell at myself in my head. *You dumbass*. *Real smooth*, *Sexsmith*.

She's going through her open case next to her, I can see her arms moving but can't see what she's doing. Then suddenly she's up, out of the seat and back in the aisle, pads down toward me as if she forgot something.

I catch a whiff of her perfume as she walks by. Dizzying, intoxicating. The swish of her skirt. I watch her little toe-heel trot down the aisle. My body acts without my mind and I reach for her. My hand on her hip. Lightly at first, but then she doesn't pull away and I grab her harder. Both hands and I stand, pull her toward me, her back to me, and she is still. I can't see her face but I can feel her breath through my hands, she's holding it. Surprised. Waiting.

I lift her skirt in the back to reveal her perfect ass. A work of art. A combination of genetics and squats and hundreds of hours at the gym. She knows it. She's bare under her red dress, no panties, no stockings. Perhaps that's what she forgot. I can't resist, I palm the apple of her ass, caress the flesh, spreading her cheeks and opening her slit.

She lets out her breath, finally, and it comes with a breathy moan, just a little.

And I'm gone. The slightest noise from her lips and all I can feel is what it'll be like to be inside her, to feel her body curl around my arm and

buck and thrash and grasp as she comes. I've got to feel it. Got to make her.

I press against her back. Her neck is bare, hair up, and my mouth is just at the corner of her jaw, below her ear. I reach around her and pin her arms to her sides, pressing her back to lean against me, and she arches, thrusts her hips up, feels the cock behind my fly. She lets her head lean back against me, lets me take her weight.

"Bend over." Right next to her ear. Barely audible.

I release her from her hold. She turns her head just a bit and her face is quizzical, open, lustful, a tad resistant. I run my hand up under her dress firmly, continue to drag it up her back, then press, hard, on her shoulder blades, bending her over the train seat in front of her.

"I said bend over."

Faster now. Unbuckle and unzip. The dress pushed up to her waist, one hand on her lower back to keep her hips tipped up to me. Her asshole is dark pink, a burst between her cheeks, perfectly smooth, and her ass is perfectly round, my thighs are already quivering and hips pulsing, so ready to fuck.

I grab one of the condoms I always keep tucked into the inner pocket of my bag. Roll it on. Spit into my palm, and again, lube up my cock. Spit again at my two fingers and shove them at her hole.

I hear her gasp—"ah"—just once—and she glances back over her shoulder, eyes heavy-lidded and dark. I push on her upper back again.

"Head down."

Her body shudders at my voice and gives in. A ripple of submission through her backbone and I feel to my toes the way it makes every hair on my body stand up, clench, awaken.

Cockhead at her asshole, I enter her easily, so smooth. So tight. The resistance of her ass is just more friction and tension between us and I want to tear into her. Split her apart. Harder now. Faster and she's taking it so well, "so good baby," I whisper to myself, *fuck it's so good*. She keeps her legs strong and pushes back against me. It's not enough lube and I remember the bottle in my pocket and laugh to myself. What kind of pervert am I to carry lube on the train?

I pull out and squirt it right on my dick, smear it, and ease back into her.

Oh yeah, *give me that ass*. *Give it to me*.

The girl in the red dress has her arms braced against the seats, bracelets jangling. We hit a rhythmic sliding stride and she brings her forearm down in front of her, leans forward, brings her other hand between her legs. Immediately I feel her knees weaken and press together, back arch and spine curl and oh it's beautiful. I bring my hand up her spine to her shoulder blades, then her neck, take a handful of hair and keep her steady. She pulls against me, not to get away, but to heighten sensation. Struggling has such varying degrees. She doesn't want out, she wants more.

I take grips on her hip and hair. Slam against her hard, pull out slow. Slick where my cock is fat inside her, swelling and eager. Resistance and tension. She tips even further forward onto the seat until she's held up by it, lifted at the waist, hand furious between her legs, thighs pressed so hard together, on her tiptoes straining up and tipping forward more, further, until she lets one foot come up off the fl and bend at the knee, toes curling.

She is starting to let go, really let go, become undone at the seams, and she can't keep the tension in her muscles so she stops resisting my hand in her hair, my palm against the flesh of her ass, holding her cheeks apart, fingers gripping her hipbone. But I don't let go, I just hold her stronger, tighter, take her a little deeper as she opens, opens deeper, opens hard, and every hinge in her body loosens, I feel it from inside pulse and ripple and again, and again, until she is gasping, chest heaving, crying out, gasping for air. And I ease up, slide in slow, press hard and sweet against her as orgasm fades, shudders, and her body rebuilds itself anew.

I pull out and let her rest. We are quiet a moment. I release my hand from her mess of hair and caress her neck gently, let my hand drape across her hips and thighs, even find her hand, wet and warm from her own liquid, touch her fingertips gently.

Her breathing calms. She sighs, once. Reaches up to brush her hair from her face and I stand, tuck my cock, zip up, run my fingers through my perfectly messy hair to assess the damage.

She stays where she is, leaning for support over the bench seat. I pull the skirt of her dress down over her hips with a shit-eating grin on my face and smack her ass once, a little harder than I meant to, but playful, and she gasps and tenses, then stands. Her makeup is smeared. Her face is still open and sweet from the release but it changes as she watches me. I gather my book and pocket bottle of lube and put them back in my bag, pick up my jacket and slide my arms into the sleeves.

She’s still watching. Eyes wide. Breathing.

“We’re here,” I say. The train is slowing and I can just make out the tunnels of Penn Station as we arrive in New York City. She blinks. Opens her mouth to say something.

I grin. Lord, she’s cute. I kiss her cheek as I slip by her and remove her heavy suitcases from the overhead racks. I notice strappy black high heel shoes at her seat and my mouth waters.

Heaving the last of the bags down, I turn to her again. She’s still by my seat, now empty, one finger in her mouth, looking a little shy. I smile and nod, once, a goodbye-take-care-have-a-nice-night gesture, and turn to the door as the train comes to a full stop.

“Um!” she calls after me. I look back. “Thank you?”

I give her a long glance from her ankles up to her legs to her hips and belly and breasts, the disheveled red dress, hair tumbling from its neat design on her head. She’s stunning, really. Delicious.

“Don’t mention it,” I say, and step off the train.

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“The call to write is a call that’s received in the body first. For hundreds of years poets and writers have described the creative process as a physical urgency, a sense that things will fly apart if they don’t get the pencil to the page in time. Creativity is not tidy or polite—it’s insistent. It calls us to feel, not dimly, not safely, but wildly, passionately, in every cell and fiber. If we are to answer that call, we have to be able to feel every part of our lives.”

- John Lee
from Writing From the Body

Charles Lyons

Bio

Charles Lyons is a filmmaker and writer who lives in San Francisco. This was the first story he wrote for the Erotic Reading Circle.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I've been interested in stories relating to sex for about as long as I've been interested in sex, but I started writing erotica in an attempt to short- circuit the perfectionist part of my brain. I guess I was thinking I might be less attached to the outcome, but I'm not sure it worked. Good stories about sex are just as hard to write as good stories about anything else, maybe harder in some cases.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I find it helpful to have a group to read for, to push myself to get things done on a regular basis. And even when I have nothing ready to read I almost always leave more inspired than when I arrived—I'm consistently impressed not only by the quality of the writing there but the variety of subjects, styles, and approaches. A safe, receptive environment is important with any new writing, and that's never more true than when sexuality is involved. Some of the most inspiring stories I've heard have been the most raw, naked, and personal.

What's the inside scoop on your story? I was careful not to explicitly name the location of my story, but astute readers can probably guess it pretty

easily. It wasn’t based on an actual experience, just assembled from a “what-if” and lots of small fragments, like a lot of stories probably are.

Heart-Shaped Box

Charles Lyons

It was the first thing he noticed after climbing out of the car. Before the dust or the heat or the Flintstone mobile trundling by had even registered, he saw her come around the back of the cargo truck, arms full of camping gear.

She wasn't wearing pants.

Not just a bathing suit or panties or even a thong, nothing. Her ass beneath her t-shirt as bare as the day she was born, legs dusted with a pale sheen of talc, fluffy tuft of pink—yes, pink!—in the front.

He forced himself not to stare as she dumped her armload on the lift gate of the truck, clapped her hands a couple times, and came over to him, one hand extended in greeting.

"You must be Nate," she said. "Sarah's little brother. Sorry, not little. Younger."

"Yeah, that's right."

"So you're a virgin, huh?"

His sister had been referring to him this way for weeks, so he knew she just meant this was his first time here. But he was sure that he blushed.

She had almond eyes and a dark bob with magenta streaks in her bangs. As he fumbled through a reply, he managed to avoid checking to see if the carpet matched the accents in the drapes. But he was sure it did. She introduced herself as Treasure and he spent several minutes trying to guess which Eastern European country she was from before he realized it was an English word.

His sister and her shaggy boyfriend came around the car to hug Treasure and started discussing the camp layout, pointing to the little red boundary flags that dotted the edge of the street, the pile of tarps marking the far corner of their territory, the distant, barren mountains beyond which the sun would rise and set.

It was only then that he noticed the pirate flag over the neighboring camp, the immaculate blue sky, the couplet of cupcakes cruising past camp in the clear afternoon light, folds of frosting hiding the heads of their drivers.

He had arrived. He would have stories to tell back in Ohio, oh yes. They thought he was a weirdo for coming out here, but they had no idea.

Nate followed Treasure around all afternoon, helping to unload the truck, offering to lift heavy things whenever possible, stealing glances when he was sure no one was looking. When she pulled off some work gloves he managed to get a good look at her left hand, which was ringless—but maybe she'd taken it off for safekeeping. She had Mediterranean skin, a mild tan everywhere he could see, no bikini lines except for a pale stripe on her neck, and her round, firm ass cheeks taunted him all day long.

He unloaded and set up his tent, then repositioned it when she suggested a better location. He put his cooler in one corner and his duffel bag in the other, then pumped up his air mattress only to realize he should have put it inside the tent first.

Godzilla walked past and waved hello before moving on down the street.

He and Sarah's boyfriend Justin unloaded a couch from the truck, then Nate helped raise the shade structure, tighten the ratchets, and string blacklights, meeting his other campmates-to-be along the way.

There was Wild Bill Yonder, a tall man in a cowboy hat who showed him how to tie a trucker's hitch. DJ Trainwreck, who had brought a surprisingly large pile of expensive-looking audio equipment to a very dirty place. Everest, a brassy girl in a tutu who flirted with everyone and called him Sparky. Doctor Awesome, who came striding up out of the dust in a waistcoat and a pith helmet, crooked grin on his face, and knew where everything went and in what order. Princess Tumbleweed and Mayday and Dirty Vargas and Captain Trips and Lulu and Steve, and all of them very friendly and most of them somewhat odd and he had a hard time imagining them in normal clothes sitting behind a desk or talking on the phone or watching television.

Around them their neighbors' camps sprang up: a field of crucified Barbies, a jungle gym that became a big silver dome, a giant ketchup bottle at the intersection. At one point a topless woman with magnificent anti-gravity breasts walked by and smiled at him and he remembered to wave just in time.

And everywhere always the distinctive dry powdery smell of alkali flats.

Late in the afternoon he went back to his tent to get some more sunscreen and came around the corner of the truck to see Treasure standing close to Doctor Awesome, one leg rising to entwine with his as she curled

up into him to kiss him, his hand on the back of her neck, and Nate felt a sick twist of envy shoot through his gut.

The air was hard and hot, his mouth was dry, and even the steamboat churning up the 4:30 spoke no longer felt magical.

***

"I was shirt-cunting today," she said.

Doctor Awesome hung a headlamp on a hook by the side door of their van. "I noticed. What was that about?"

"I don't know, I guess I wanted to be naked but I didn't want to burn my shoulders."

"Or put sunscreen on."

"Ahhh, that takes too long." Treasure walked on her knees across the bed that filled the back of the van. "Did you see Nate? Sarah's little brother? His eyes were like saucers when he saw me. I thought they were going to fall out of his head."

Doc chuckled. "I bet he doesn't see much shirt-cunting in Ohio." "I don't know if he's ever seen pussy before. He's such a sweet innocent kid." She sighed, then tugged to adjust one of the wine-colored curtains that surrounded the bed on three sides.

The Doctor glanced over from where he was organizing the contents of his utility belt. "You seem nervous. Is something on your mind?"

"No. Maybe …" she added in a guilty little-girl voice, eyes averted. He watched her, recognizing the beginning of the Game.

"Are you being a naughty girl again?"

"No," she said, this time playing her part to the hilt.

He gripped her by the back of the neck and stretched her length along the bed, face down. She was wearing fur-trimmed shorts now, but he yanked them down, revealing the smooth globes of her ass. She gasped and he gave one cheek a firm smack with his hand.

"Now I know you are, you little tramp. What are you thinking about?" he asked as he squeezed and stroked the injured cheek.

"I was just thinking … about him being here for his first time, and …"

"Yes?"

"Out exploring the playa, all innocent and inexperienced, and what it would be like if some woman …"

His hand stopped circling, hovered. "What woman?"

“Some woman who was not so innocent or inexperienced were to seduce him, and take him back to her tent and have her way with him, and give him something to really remember …”

He smiled, though she couldn’t see his face. “Would you like to be that woman?”

She was quiet for a moment. She could feel his cock pressing against her upper thigh.

“Maybe,” she said in a very small voice.

He slapped her ass hard and she jumped under him. “Yes, sir,” she said with a gasp.

“Yes, sir, what?” Stroking again.

“Yes, sir, I’d like to be that woman,” she admitted, and turned to look up him through her lashes.

“And do what?”

His tone was steady, probing. She watched his face as she went on. “If I ran into him on an art car, or out dancing, I’d come up to him and start flirting with him, maybe stroke his arm or his shoulder, tease him a little, dance really close to him …”

“He’d be embarrassed and wouldn’t know how to react.”

She smirked. “I’d whisper in his ear and ask him if he wanted me to leave him alone.”

“And if he said no?”

“Then I’d sit on his lap, or back into him while we were dancing, rub my ass against him, feel him getting hard …”

“You’d torture that poor kid until he exploded,” Doc said, his fingers fluttering on the insides of her thighs.

“Oh, you know I would,” she grinned, squirming under him, demonstrating how she would grind her ass into her quarry.

He held her gaze for a moment, then reached between her legs, found her cunt slick and wet, dipped his fingers in and then brought them up and pushed them into her open mouth. She sucked on them, still watching his face.

“Seems like you want it pretty bad,” he said.

She nodded. This was the point in the Game at which he began to describe the things she would like to do, and she would agree to each interrogatory and add her own embellishments. But tonight the Game took a different course, a new course.

“I think you should do it.”

She inhaled sharply and her stomach quivered. They had done things with others before, had talked about different possibilities, but always together. This time she would be flying solo.

“I don’t know, now I’m nervous.” “Nervous or scared?”

“Nervous.”

“That’s good, it means you’re expanding your comfort zone. Do you remember when I said I was going to take you to a party blindfolded and make you do things? You were really nervous then, too, but you enjoyed it, didn’t you?”

“Yes. You were very naughty and you still won’t tell me who anyone was.”

He laughed. “I want you to be brave again.” His hand kneaded her back from her hip to just below the shoulder blade. “But you know if I let the tiger out of the cage, there will be a price.” She nodded again.

He pushed her face down into the bed and bent close to her ear. “You have three days to do it. But you pay the price either way.”

***

Nate’s brain was scattered in small, irregular pieces over an area at least two miles in diameter.

Each morning the sun drove him from his tent, and he rode his bike out into a lunar landscape filled with fragments of dreams he’d never had. He ate pancakes while listening to classic rock anthems, bounced on trampolines, dodged dust devils, danced like John Travolta. Once someone came out from their camp to feed him a grilled cheese sandwich; another time he was asked to joust against a man-sized inflated monkey. All day he wandered aimlessly, like a tuft of marabou some thoughtless raver had set loose on the wind. Each evening he would return under a dusky pastel sky, having left more of himself behind.

After sunset he was back out on the playa, now an astronomical fairyland, swimming through a vast darkness coronated with lights and flames and mysteries. Each night he stayed out until the fire faded from his blood and the horizon was just an endless line of unreachable glowing beads in the dark, unknown pleasures taunting him, and then crawled home, exhausted, to the cold, dusty refuge of his tent.

There were other women. Women with larger breasts. Tiny pixie girls with smudged faces and butterfly wings. Six-foot goddesses who wore their sexuality like a strap-on battering ram. Filthy hippie girls with bright smiles behind their matted hair. Fresh scrubbed virgin girls in khaki shorts, eyes like hungry pools.

But he realized that what attracted him to each of these women, endlessly different as they were, was the same thing: each of them reminded him of Treasure in some way. They had her haircut, her feistiness, her bold sexuality, her freely-displayed figure, her inventive costume sense. They were unstoppable—they could do anything they wanted, the playa wasn't dry to them, it was the world's wettest oyster and it was all theirs.

He wanted to talk to these dazzling, exotic creatures, but he felt as inadequate as he was giftless. His sporadic conversations were friendly but stilted and abrupt. What could he say to them that could possibly be of interest? His stories were all about fucking off in Ohio, killing time between classes, dreading the day he had to look for a job. He had no conception of a world that could contain wonders like this.

But it did.

He didn't see Treasure again until the evening of the third day. She waited for him by his tent, in a fishnet bodystocking that somehow accentuated every curve of her body into hyper-real relief, as if she were the only truly three-dimensional thing in sight.

"Is your tent comfortable?" "Yeah."

"Show me."

Inside, she zipped the flap and put one palm on his rapidly- beating heart. He was afraid to ask, but he had to know.

"What about … isn't Doctor Awesome your boyfriend, or something?"

"Yes, and thanks for asking. We have an … open-minded relationship. He knows about this, and he's okay with it."

This was not the answer Nate was expecting, but she seemed perfectly calm as she made eye contact.

"This is a one-time thing. You can't turn into a puppy dog and follow me around the rest of the week, because I'm not going to come home with you, no matter what. Understand?"

He nodded. This stung, but he knew what was being offered was already way beyond what he'd allowed himself to hope for.

"You mean … what happens on the playa stays on the playa?" "Not exactly. I tell him everything, remember." She repeated the word "everything" and he tried not to imagine how detailed she got. "He doesn't mind? He doesn't get jealous?" This did not compute. "He knows he's the most important person in my life, just like I know he feels the same way about me. If you really love and trust someone, wouldn't you want them to enjoy all the possibilities life has to offer? Why would you want to deprive them of an adventure, or something that feels good?"

Put this way it sounded eminently reasonable, but his brain still objected. He felt like he was talking to one of his professors back at school. One of the good ones.

"You don't mind if he … if he's with other girls?" Even though he wasn't talking about himself, he felt a surge of anxiety—and under it, something like excitement.

She grinned. "I *like* watching him fuck other women. I like helping him. I like fucking women, too, you know."

Nate's mind spun. Sarah and Justin had warned him that things could get wild out here, and his imagination had gone crazy places with that, but never had he imagined something like this. His dream hedonists … well, they didn't seem to know each other, he realized. Which was why they were imaginary, and this was real.

"I like you Nate. I chose you, because I want to give you something special. You understand?"

He took a deep breath and nodded. "I won't be a puppy dog." "Good. Now come on and show me what you got, champ."

He was so nervous he was soft, but she knelt before him, sucked him into her warm wet mouth, and he stiffened almost immediately. He'd been with girls back in school, but they were nearly as awkward and unsure as he was. This was different.

"Relax," she said. "Just pay attention to what we're doing and how it feels, so you can remember it all later."

She shrugged herself out of the bodystocking, peeling it down her lean body. Her breasts were small and round, with a silver ring in her left nipple. He'd never seen one up close before—he'd always associated that kind of thing with biker chicks. He reached out a hand, stopped.

"It's okay," she said. "It feels good to play with it, just be gentle." "Did it hurt?"

She smiled. “Oh, yes. But I was on E, so it was a *good* hurt.”

She pushed him onto his back and straddled him, then walked her knees up his body until her pussy was right over his face. He finally got a good look at what he’d been too shy to look directly at before: her pubic hair was dyed the same magenta as her hair streak and shaved into the shape of a heart.

He licked, he stroked, he listened. Every gentle direction came with a compliment.

He remembered a crucial mantra hammered into his head during sex ed class, braced himself for an awkward intermission. “So, uh, I have condoms in my bag somewhere …”

She rolled off of him, produced a condom from thin air, unwrapped it with her teeth, and then took his cock in her hands, gave it another long suck, then stroked it gently with both hands as she worked the sheer condom down over his whole length. She shot him a reassuring smile. It was the sexiest thing he’d ever seen.

She crouched over him again, reached between her legs, then leaned forward, and he could see a flash of white teeth and the dark halo of hair around her head as she guided him into her. He felt pressure on the head of his cock, a moment of resistance, and then the pressure became a tightness around the head, soft and firm at the same time.

She sat back, driving herself down on him, and he felt a shiver of disbelief in his lower belly as he saw his shaft disappear inside her and then she was *fucking* him, rising up above before thrusting back down over him, riding his cock, her face bobbing before him. Slowly at first, all the way up and all the way back down, a delicious all-encompassing squeeze of her body as it embraced his cock, the tickle of her pubic hair as she pressed herself all the way to the base of him. A low guttural moan building to a ragged rhythmic gasp as she accelerated slowly, leaning forward to put weight on her arms, her hips rising and falling, faster and then faster. He concentrated on matching her rhythm, rocking his hips along with hers, thrusting up into her.

He could smell her sweat, feel her hips grow damp under his hands, the muscles of her ass clenching and relaxing as she rode him. He reached up, found the ring in her nipple, thumbed it, let it brush back and forth against his knuckles.

She found her groove and fucked him in a rapid steady cadence, breath choppy, muscles taut, head low in the space over his right shoulder, damp hair brushing his face. The air was rich with fuck sweat, pussy juice, and the unmistakable funk of latex.

He could feel the fire gathering in his belly, somehow hot and cold at the same time, felt his legs clench in anticipation, his balls tighten, and then: he grunted as the white fire shot down his cock and up his spine and out the top of his head, but she kept going, almost anxious now, a whimper, and then she tightened, went rigid, clamped him between her knees and dug her fingers deep into his arms as she groaned in his ear, shuddering to a halt. She held perfectly still for a long moment, frozen in place.

He felt himself softening inside her, and then her whole body seemed to turned liquid and she let out her breath and collapsed next to him.

"Thank you," she murmured in his ear and a moment later he managed to reply, "No, thank *you*. That was …"

That was as far as his brain could take him, and he lay there, sweat cooling on his skin, limbs still entangled, and he squeezed her hand tightly, felt her squeezing back, heard her giggle as she relaxed.

Outside he heard the percussive shout of a propane flamethrower, saw the momentary orange glow light up the rainfly before the dragon or firetruck or apocalyptic war machine drove on. Somewhere a conductor or ship's mate was chanting the last call for the Lahontan Limited, bound for destiny, Pike's Peak and points beyond.

He felt two very different things at the same time: the glow of gratitude, an electric sizzle that lingered in his skin; and the ache of knowledge that the party was over, the magic was gone, the color already fading away.

When he awoke, he was alone in the dark tent.

***

"How can I repay you, sir?"

Treasure had completed the telling of her encounter with Nate and knelt at the foot of the bed, head bowed.

Doctor Awesome smiled. "I will entertain … suggestions."

"Well … I've seen you talking to that cute blonde girl from the Camp of the Roger Jollies."

"She is cute."

"She *is* very cute. I was thinking I could offer to wash her hair and give her a sponge bath—she must be very dusty now. So I'd undress her slowly while you watched, and wipe her down with baby wipes, all over."

She crawled atop him on the bed.

"And then I'd kiss her, and bite her lip, and work my way down her neck, and I'd suck on those beautiful breasts …" She pulled one of his nipples into her mouth, released it with a pop. "They're very … pert. And then I'd lick her pussy, I know how much you like that." She ran the tip of her tongue over her upper lip and flashed an eyebrow at him.

"I know how much *you* like that." She grinned.

"And then," she slid down his body, "I'd suck your cock until you were hard enough to fuck her." She paused to demonstrate, eyes on his. "Does that sound like something you'd like to do?"

"Yes … but it also sounds like something *you'd* really like to do.

What I'd like to do is …"

***

Much later, curled into him, she murmured, "Now that you've let the tiger out of the cage, are you sure you can handle her?" "I only let you out to let you know I control the gate."

She turned to put a cool palm to his cheek, searched his eyes. The Game was over now.

"You're sure it was okay?"

"You did great." He smiled. "I'm glad you told me everything."

She inhaled deeply, pulling herself against him fiercely, face pressed into his chest, then looked up at him with her big dark eyes glittering.

"I'm your Treasure."

***

Nate saw Treasure the next day, wearing nothing but six-inch platform boots and a leather collar around her neck with a big ring dangling from the front of it. A leather leash was clipped to the ring, the other end around her wrist. She waved and walked away across the playa, long strides with her platform heels. He watched her shadow chase her, the natural sway of her ass teasing him as she departed. Desire and futility burned inside him. He knew that he would not touch her again, and yet he clung to the bittersweet sting of memory.

He knew he didn't need to avoid Doctor Awesome, but he did it anyway, not trusting himself.

But something had changed. It was as if he had broken through some kind of membrane, and on the other side … something that felt almost, but not quite, like home. One afternoon he found himself lost in conversation with a girl in a field of pillows, both of them discovering they were theater nerds, trading stories of narrowly averted disasters and epic shows. Here it was.

Then Nate looked up from his map one morning just as Doctor Awesome was carrying a plate of eggs and three cups back to his van and found himself locking eyes with the man.

The bastard smiled and winked at him.

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“Asking why someone would write about sex is rather like asking why anyone would eat at a five-star French restaurant. The inherent pleasure of the activity in question seems rather obvious to me. As a pornographer, I am in the same position as the restaurant critic. I get to do something I love while being paid for it. Why would I ever stop writing about sex?”

- *Patrick Califia*

Jeff Jacobson

Bio

Jeff Jacobson is a professional coach, novelist, and an occasional writer of erotica. Whenever he tries to write really hot porn, it becomes humorous. He's okay with that. He lives in Shanghai and Los Angeles.
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Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I wrote my very first erotic anything in the late nineties, a poem about how my sperm smelled sweet. Then I went to a local artists' group where I read it, even though I was terrified. When I finished reading, the audience responded with laughter and applause. I was hooked.

When I write erotica, I have to fight a constant inner Catholic voice that says, "You shouldn't write about that. It's dirty!" When I write non-fiction, I have to fight a constant inner grammarian voice that says, "That was the worst use of a comma in the history of the alphabet!" The same war, but a different battle.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? In 2006 I saw an ad for the Erotic Reading Circle at the Center for Sex and Culture. I threw together a fictional tryst with too much backstory and not enough sex, gathered my courage, went, and read it. I became a regular, because I couldn't get enough of the support and encouragement from Jen, Carol, and the other writers there, people who had the guts to write stories about

putting hoo-hoos and wee-wees and whatnots together in a frictional way. If you've never read at, or at least gone to, an erotic writing group, just go, for god's sake. It'll rock your world.

Ricky Dumb Ass

Jeff Jacobson

Now that my dad is working with a lame ass executive coach for his job, he keeps making all these stupid announcements: Last week, he told my mom and me that we all needed to lose weight. I don't really know what this means, but I assume a lot of push-ups and gluten-free diets are headed our way.

This week he told me that he and I were going camping over the weekend.

"For some much needed father/son bonding time," he said, giving me a fake one-two punch in the ribs. "Jason, you just finished your freshman year here at State. We have so much to catch up on."

"The fuck?" I wanted to say to him. The last thing I wanted to do was share a tent with my gassy, blabbermouth dad. But he was footing the bill for college; plus, my mom and I had learned long ago that when my dad got an idea, the best we could hope for was that he'd forget about it.

Well, he didn't forget about it, so my mom took me shopping for camping gear.

"You'll have fun," she'd said as she looked for a parking spot at the mall. Since when had my mom's voice turned from sincere to autopilot? Maybe a long time ago.

So I find myself sitting in my bedroom, my parents out on a date together (another development from my dad's coach), new duffel bags strewn about on my floor and packages of white socks unopened in a plastic bag near my feet.

My ex-friend Ricky had texted me twenty minutes ago. "U free?"

I wrote back "Pckrhed" without thinking. We use the word "peckerhead" to mean lots of things:

1. A replacement for each other's names,
2. "What a dick!" and,
3. "Yes," "Hell yes," or "Fuck yeah, dude!"

I meant Number Three when I sent my reply, which was fine, except that I had forgotten he wasn't my friend anymore.

"B ovr soon," Ricky replied.

Now I sit in my room, not knowing what to pack for the trip, and mad all over again at Ricky Lame Ass. What the hell does he want?

We'd been sort of friends for a long time. No one else liked us, so it wasn't so much that we sought each other out as we just ended up together, like the last two crumbs in a bag of cookies.

People didn't like him because he was poor and lived in a trailer. People didn't like me because of the one or two (okay, maybe three) times I had gone to the psych ward.

I don't even know if you could say we were friends, but we watched movies together and smoked a lot of pot (he could get it, I could bankroll it) and were slightly less mean to each other than we were to everybody else.

Lately, though, the barbs we'd been throwing at each other had started to sting. Maybe they'd always stung, but not as much as the shit other people threw our way. I thought of it as target practice; we nailed each other first so that when it happened with everyone else, it wasn't so bad.

But something had changed. Maybe it was because I'd been in college for a year. Maybe it was because he wasn't ever going to college. I'd made too many below-the-belt comments about the fake green grass near his mom's trailer home, his dead dad, his job. He'd said one too many things about lobotomies and shock therapy.

One day a few weeks ago I'd gotten tired of the whole thing and told him to fuck off. I'll never forget how quiet it was after I'd said it, how great it felt to see the effect of my words register on someone's face, to see them sink in like hooks

Ricky stopped coming by after that. It's kinda weird when your best not-friend, the only person who you ever hang out with, doesn't like you anymore, and you don't like him anymore, and when the last person who even tolerates you doesn't want to see you anymore, what do you do?

Now he was coming over, and I swear to God if he gives me shit about bringing ten new pairs of socks on the camping trip I'll kick him in the balls.

We're both sitting on my bed. I'm biting my fingernails because it's more fun than trying to figure out what not to bring camping. He's bouncing his leg on the bed and it's making me seasick. Or mattress sick.

"Stop!" I yell. He does.

I cringe. The word floats in the air for a long time, sounding mean.

I wish I hadn't said it.

I turn to look at him, which ends up being the same time he decides to look at me, and I didn't know how close we were sitting together, so close

that I worry I have dragon breath, so close I can smell his, which isn't exactly the mintiest freshest either, and then the weirdest thing happens:

We start making out.

Holy shit mother of God, we do.

His lips wrap around mine. His mouth is hot and wet. Lines of electric shock shoot down to my gut and my dick gets instantly hard.

What the fuck are we doing? Any time we ever see anything even *close* to two men doing it on TV we yell, "Faggot!" and throw things at the screen. Needless to say, I have never kissed any other guy in all my nineteen years of life.

Except that now our heads are tilted and I am shoving his face into mine with my hands, he is digging at my teeth with his tongue, we're making these noises that are totally embarrassing except that maybe for the first time ever I almost don't care how I sound or look.

The pads of my fingers can feel the acne scars on his jawline as he pushes me down on the bed and gets on top of me. He is taller than me; I have to scoot down so his head won't hit the wall. He keeps kissing me like we've done this off and on our whole lives.

"Jason," he whispers, and instead of sounding stupid or faggoty it undoes me. The muscles in my back sort of liquefy, and I worry for a moment that I will drip down into the mattress and drain out the floor. I can't remember when he'd called me anything other than Peckerhead before.

His mouth is incredibly spacious, and it seems like I can't get in it enough, can't taste it enough, can't get my tongue inside deep enough and find out what's going on in there. My hands are all over his back, pushing on the bony nobs of his spine, then sliding down and grabbing his ass. I'm so far beyond recognition that I just let myself feel his ass, even though it's the gayest thing anybody could ever do. His ass muscles are bunching and squeezing as he pushes his hips against mine, and I hear grunting noises coming out of my mouth.

I don't think I'm kissing him as much as eating at his face. I want to put his eyes and nose in my mouth, to suck on the strands of hair that slide over his forehead, to swallow his chin whole.

I try to swallow his chin whole and he moans. I watch his face as my jaw opens up snake-like to get more of his chin in my mouth. His eyes are closed and I feel him shudder on top of me. He moans again, and I swear to

God, his moan rushes right through me, from my scalp down to the ends of my toes, and I can't think straight anymore. It's like the logical part of my brain stands up, goes into a back room somewhere and closes the door, leaving me alone here with Ricky and all the things I suddenly want us to do to each other. I decide I had better act soon before that part comes back and starts bitching me out, so I push him on his side and scoot down even farther.

He is wearing the jeans he always does. I unzip his pants and try to slide them over his hips. He has to herky-jerky to get them down past his knees. He smells kind of poor, kind of trashy, but like fabric softener, too. I like how he smells right now. A lot. He's wearing clean white underwear, which you wouldn't necessarily expect from him. His dick is pointing straight out, like a pole holding up a tent. I don't want to think about tents or camping so I throw the image out of my brain.

I pull his underwear down and his skinny-long dick sticks out from a bush of dark brown pubic hair. He smells warm down here, like bread, and I want to look at his dick, to get a really good look, because I've never seen a real one up close (except my own, which I don't think counts). It's longer and thinner than mine and bends forward a little at the top.

But I don't stare at it too long, because what if he sees me and says, "What are you looking at, dickhead?"

Instead, I open my mouth and let the first part of it go inside. His dick is really warm on my tongue, and I lick it so that it pushes up against the roof of my mouth. Ricky makes an "oomph" sound so I close my lips and suck on it. I figure that's what I'm supposed to do. Plus I kind of want to. I can hear breath whooshing out of my nose.

Everyone talks about dicks being rock hard and stuff, and his is, but I didn't know it would be soft, too.

"Ooh yeah, baby," he whispers, which totally freaks me out so I push him out of my mouth and sit up. It just totally ruined the moment, you know? Why did he have to go and say such a cheesy thing? Ricky Dumb Ass.

"What?" he asks. Before I can rip in to him he shoves me back down on the bed.

We both know that he is stronger than me. I used to hate that, but now I'm glad, because I try to push him off me but can't. He lays himself over me and covers my mouth with his and we make an airlock sound together.

Then I forget why I was mad at him, because his face is so big, and he tastes so good, like butter and a boy and a total surprise.

He finds my crotch and starts squeezing my dick through my sweatpants. More electric bolts start shooting again, this time from between my legs up into my chest, and before I can ask him to, he shoves his hands down past the waistband and grabs at me.

My arms throw themselves around his neck. It feels so good to have his hands squeezing my dick that I start thrusting myself in and out, in and out. He doesn't seem to care that I am basically fucking his hand so I decide not to care either.

Ricky lets go of my dick and pulls my sweatpants and boxers down, and his mouth starts sucking on my dick and now I know why everybody talks about how great blowjobs are, because really, I think it's probably the best thing I've ever felt.

His mouth is like this tight, wet tube, pulling and pushing and sucking on me all at the same time. I grab on to his hair with my hands and yank hard. He doesn't seem to notice.

It starts to feel so good that I think I'm gonna …

"UNGH!" I yell. My dick is this one big gushing spasm, and even though I jack off a lot, this is like a brand new category of dick goodness, like I singlehandedly discovered a new planet, just right there on the other side of the moon, one big pulsating planet of dickness.

My hands beat on his back as I shoot into his mouth. I try to stop myself, because that's so nasty and embarrassing, cumming in a guy's mouth, I hope I don't make him puke, but I can't help it, it feels so good but I should have stopped, I …

And now the weirdest part is that he has slid back up and he's kissing me, even though it's probably like trying to hit a moving target because I'm still flopping and shuddering all over the place. I can't stop myself from shaking. I finally calm down a bit and taste the sperm in his mouth and we should both be ashamed of ourselves but we're not, at least I'm not and he doesn't seem to be. We use our tongues to push the bleachy flavor back and forth in our mouths.

His shoulder starts bouncing as I suck on his lips, and then I feel his arm banging against my belly and realize he is jerking himself off and I think, 'Oh my God!' because isn't whacking off something you're supposed to do in private?

But I don’t stop kissing him and I can tell that something is about to happen because he starts making this whining sound out his nose, like a cross between a snotty little kid and a puppy, and then he pulls his head back hard.

Right at that moment I happen to be biting his lower lip, so that when his head jerks I taste his blood in my mouth, like sucking on a copper penny, and I feel something warm and wet squirt on my stomach. I watch the brown in his eyes disappear, leaving only the whites behind.

Now we are lying on my bed. Ricky is trying to catch his breath while I just breathe through my mouth. I look down and see a drop of sperm, about the size of a dime, sitting on one of the packages of socks I’m supposed to take camping with me.

I get up off the bed and throw the socks into a duffel bag, not really caring anymore what I bring or don’t bring on the stupid camping trip.

But I swear to God that if my ex-best friend calls me a cum-eating faggot I’ll kick him hard in the balls.

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Marlene Hoeber

Bio

Marlene Hoeber is a long time queer, kink, trans, sex- positive, feminist, social justice activist and a devout pervert. She is currently Director of Collections at the archive of the Center for Sex & Culture. Marlene was a founding member of the world's first college campus based BDSM organization in 1991. She is also president of the Northern California chapter of the Liberal Gun Club, a member of the board of directors of the Center for Sex & Culture, and also a member of the board of directors of the IMsL Foundation. She also has a day job.

Mini-Interview

Do you write under your own name? I do write under my own name. I have been doing sex-related activism of one sort or another for 25 years. I made my first decisions about using my own name in that context both when I was young and fearless, but also when we were all dying and fearlessness was how we did everything. I have decided in the interim that I can stick with those early decisions. I think that they have been good for me. Like everyone, I have done things that I am less proud of than other things, but if I am living (a small) part of my life in public, it is very important to me that I be honest.

What's the inside scoop on your story? This story started as a series of emails between my partner, Dorian Katz, and I. She is an artist (see cover illustration drawing) and I am very supportive of her career. I began at one point joking about being the "artwife." There was, for much of the second

half of the 20th century, a myth that the real Lee Krasner scuttled her own career as an artist in deference to the career of her partner, Jackson Pollock. This is not true. Sexism in the art world is what diminished her career. I began writing to Dorian as Lee writing to Jackson, snarkily complaining about that public perception, simultaneously taking about actual things Dorian and I were doing regarding her art career, and also we were writing each other love letters and talking dirty to each other in character. The notion of Lee as the aggressive top when away from the public eye seemed to perfectly skewer the old sexist myth.

Letter to My Girlfriend

Marlene Hoeber

Lee Krasner c/o Guggenheim
30 W. 57th St.
New York, New York
April 4, 1947

Jackson Pollock
The Springs, New York

Dearest Jacks,

It's almost as cold today as you can be. It's almost as wet today as you can get me.

I know days like this can be hard on your old bones, my darling Jack. Come back into the house to warm up, if your hands get too cold in the studio. I wish I was there to warm them up for you. Put some sugar and hot water in your gin, that's good for you when it rains.

I know you hate working when it's cold. I know the paint drops differently, but you are so much happier when you just keep going. Maybe you'll find new things with the paint working differently, thicker, slower.

Oh, it was so horrible last night, Jack. I had to go to this horrible dinner event and all the damn Guggenheims were there. You think we aren't always that fond of Peggy, well, the rest of them are real barbarians. They know all about oil and silver, but are positively stupid about everything else. They don't even know what good booze is. I have a headache that screams Courvoisier.

All is well, no worries. I did my duty as the good art-wife. I put a face to where Peggy sends a trickle of their riches. I was "interesting" for them. I even held my tongue when one of the uncles started going on about splashes of paint that a monkey could make.

I wanted to ask him if he knew where I could find a monkey that fucks like an angel and pours gin over my tits. I wanted to know if he could really train a monkey to beg for my cunt so sweetly that I can't resist. I didn't ask any of these things. I had another drink and smiled something stupid about how everyone has differing taste in art.

After dinner, the bunch of us staying at Peggy's place went back there to continue the party. Peggy went on and on about how she has never been with a woman but the prospect seems so in-ter-es-ting. She kept looking at me when she said these things. She is such a hideous bore. I don't think any amount of money could make it worth her bourgeois obsession with the daring and in-ter-es-ting. I thought one was supposed to be jaded by as much wealth as she has. Didn't she get this bit of exploration done with at Radcliffe or Sarah Lawrence or wherever it was that she went? You know that I have nothing against women, but she is so horrible!

I ran into David Smith yesterday. He is planning to come visit you in a day or two. I put two cases of gin in the back of his truck for you. It's the good stuff. I charged it on Peggy's account. Make sure you get both cases. You know how David can be.

This is important—I told David that your black eye and broken nose are from a bar fight. It might spoil your reputation as a tough old drunk for everyone to know that your injuries are from me.

Would David be able to look either of us in the face if you had to explain that I broke your nose grinding my cunt into it? Let them think you are belligerent. Let them think you rail against the world. I know that all I have to do is lift my skirt and the great fucking genius of the twentieth century begs on his knees to do whatever I want. If you are a genius, Jackson, it is as my toilet.

I can't wait to be home. It's the only place I don't have to hear about Jackson Fucking Pollock, the Greatest Fucking American Painter. I can't wait to be in my own studio. I'm tired of everything always being about you. If there wasn't a little hate, I suppose the love wouldn't be so sweet.

I wish I was waiting for you in the kitchen, by the big wood stove. I'll be there for drunken sex and lunch soon enough. Just ten more days, my sweet grumpy. We'll be in each other's arms soon. I'll be as rough or as sweet as you want, old man. I'll give you whatever you want, as long as I can be with you. I touch myself thinking of you when I go to bed. I wonder if Peggy hears me moaning your name in the dark. I hope she doesn't hear the other names for you I whisper at the ceiling: Worm, Fool, Bastard.

I miss your rough hands on my skin, even though I always tell you to try the new soap to make them softer. I miss that bump on your nose, too. I miss you in my mouth and in my cunt and in my ass.

I'll be on the late train next Friday. Jack, will you fuck me in the car in the train station parking lot?

Answer me when I am there with you.

Love L.K.

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Christine Solano

Bio

Christine Solano is the pen name of a poet, writer and photographer who lives in San Francisco. Among her previously published erotica is the story "Walls of Fire," which appeared in *Herotica 5*.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I don't see a clear boundary between the erotic and the non-erotic in my writing, it's a continuum. I can only write about my experiences, including my fantasies and fears. Some of it turns out to have sexual content, some of it can be scary, sometimes both.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? I wear many hats, including as a writer, but I started as a poet at an early age and will likely end up as one. In between, I continue to write fiction and non-fiction, mostly the latter.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? The ERC is a special place where I meet and hear voices that are at the edge of my usual circles, which I love. The range of flavors of erotic experiences presented on any given evening is inspiring, intriguing, and mind-and body-tingling. I only wish I could attend more often.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns about publishing erotic work? I use a pen name for erotic work

mainly because it frees me to share some very personal experiences and feelings while protecting both the innocent and the less-so.

Gift

Christine Solano

You’re the gift
I stole
wrapped between my legs
I tied you up
licking
each salty drop
I tell myself again
this is the last time
again
wondering why
in German
“gift”
means “poison”

Ordinary Time

Christine Solano

Afterwards
a measure of peace

our skins cooling, my hand
counting your heartbeat
slowing down

we share a beer,
we tell jokes,
like friends would

I wipe away
the taste lingering
from your last kiss

that chilling flavor of
so long

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“You were once wild here.
Don’t let them tame you.”

- *Isadora Duncan*

Tori Adams

Bio

Tori Adams is currently a doctoral student in Gender & Women's Studies. Her work focuses on stigma and violence surrounding abject identities, and looks towards popular and visual culture for points of analyses.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? Back when I wrote this story, my writing predominantly took on a confessional, private tone. Almost everything I worked on was true to my life and experiences. I realized people accessed these writings with their own arousals and histories, and began to play up the erotic aspects of these memories. Perhaps surprisingly, I find myself toning down or taming erotic writing in contrast to non-erotic in order to make pieces easier to engage with sexually and politically.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? The Erotic Reading Circle and the Center for Sex and Culture are both supportive environments for discovering your own creative and sexual expressions. Receiving feedback from others working within the erotic genre was helpful in the 'telling *a* story' vs 'telling *my* story' distinction; the Erotic Reading Circle helped to make my writing consumable. Regular writing groups take the distance between stories and their writers for granted, and may not provide the same feedback necessary for this type of work. Additionally, the parts that improve a non-erotic story often differ widely from that which could better an erotic story.

Do you write under your own name? I am writing under my own name. Though I do have privacy concerns with current and future sharing, both the span of years and amount of personal progression that have occurred since writing this piece makes it feel more protected.

What's the inside scoop on your story? The person I wrote this story about and I are still close friends, and recounting this vignette is one of our favorite party tricks.

Red Paint

Tori Adams

Two women toy with power and calculated edge play in the form of fingerpainting July 2010

She smiled at me. The corners of her teeth poked from her lips, almost hidden in the flaking dryness, her thin blood pressing out. Watching me watch her lips, she slowly, slowly, put her pen down. I could hear both ends hit the table. She tucked her hair around her ear to pinch the cigarette that I hadn't noticed, and drew it down to her lips. I wondered briefly if she had just done a magic trick, pulled it out from the nowhere space behind her ear. She sucked on the cold paper, not lighting it. The blood on her lips smeared around the white. It was grotesque; she was beautiful.

I stood to move closer. She shrieked a bit, "Sit down, I didn't tape you!" I ignored her. Of course, I wasn't ignoring her; I don't think I have or really ever could. I moved to her, knelt down in front of her. See, I thought, I'm still yours completely, I'm not disobeying. That's really how things were, and how I felt.

"What would you do if I died?" she asked me. I shook my head. "No, really. What if I just—" She looked around. "—what if I drank this jar of paint?" She plucked the glass up and held it in front of my face. "I could."

"You couldn't."

Had I really said that? Hadn't I known that was a dare?

She smiled at me. It wasn't a sweet glance, it wasn't gentle. She unscrewed the cap like she was fucking it, without ceremony or preamble, finger rubbing the rim like it was hot, breathing flesh. I gasped a bit. The cap was off. She was still rubbing along it, sometimes dipping her hand in. We both watched it come up bright red. *In flagrante delicto*. It all looked too familiar. She brought her fingers to her lips, and I thought for a moment she was going to put it along her wet slices of mouth. I saw images of little kids playing adult, tubes of pretend lipstick, of how these accidental poisonings happened. She knew better than that. She opened her mouth, not wide enough to distort her face (she was still play-acting here), opened just an inch, maybe less. She stuck her painted finger in her mouth, rubbing it clean along her gums, and pulled it out with a smack- pop sound. She licked her tongue against the next one, easing it slowly into her mouth, twirling

her tongue on the stiffness. She pulled both fingers out clean, and looked at them triumphantly. I didn't move. She picked up the jar again, not even glancing at the inside. She raised it to me in mock toast, and then paused, tilting for a second. She was waiting for me to stop her, but just a slight moment. I didn't. She leaned her head back and started pouring the red paint into her mouth. She made circles with her hand. I didn't see her grimace, not once. She swallowed easily and looked at me. She had a small drop of the paint on her chin. I rose and moved towards her. I wiped it off with my hand, rubbing it onto my skirt. I didn't know what to say.

When she smiled again, red streaked her teeth in a way it never did when she sucked my cunt. I smelled no iron or natural scent, and the way the red bled to pink against the white was stiff and hollow, like flicking a nail against bright plastic. I moved closer, holding her mouth on mine; her tongue seemed to fall into me, slight but forcefully. I could feel the paint, wondered at the toxins pinching my taste buds. I heard the pen she'd still held hit the floor. She twisted her arms above her head, and I slipped onto her. Though she was without any doubt the dominant one, it was me who stayed busy when we'd fuck; she'd laze with seemingly melting bones and I'd sometimes feel like I was fanning her, dropping grapes into her waiting teeth, always a slave, while still my fingers curved almost violently inside her, thumb tapping and yanking at her clit, fingers twined through rusty hair to pull her head back further.

Today, though, I moved slower, more languorously. I crouched comfortably between her thighs, feeling ready heat from her pussy. My teeth went from the skin below her breast up to around her flushed nipple, leaving small pale divots; they gaped like jaws. She moaned with extra air, staying in control with firm hands on my shoulders, inching towards clasping at my neck. "Hands," she sighed out, and mine went to her. I held the wide bones of her hips as I dragged her closer to me, moving fingers to smooth open her warm lips. We shook the table, knocking wooden legs, and the almost-empty jar spilled over. Red flicked against us like spittle. I changed my pace, the quickening of her breath kept my speed. My mouth met where her hands were teasing; I flicked my tongue over her curly hair, and flattened it to press her open. She parted slightly, lips keeping a secret. I lapped at her, letting my teeth catch intentionally. When my nose touched against her clit, I paused; bringing my hand closer to strum at her, I stuck my other fingers to my mouth. I spit onto them, dragging nails into the

warmth of my closed lips coated with her wetness, making them slippery like her, for her. “Girl, girl, sweetheart, bitch.” She mumbled out endearments like an incantation, she said my name like it was a command. I leaned so she could thread herself onto me as I met her with shaking hands.

She came silently with her mouth and eyes open; they were colored the same red.

She rolled away from me, and I thought about taking her to the hospital, maybe the emergency room. I could imagine how they would see us, wide-eyed and wild, dripped with red, fingerprints and nail digs marked against our smeared sweat. She’d walk in first, me guiding her; they wouldn’t know what to make of us, which part to fix first. It wasn’t what she needed. I stopped her then. With my hand reaching around her back, I mouthed against her ear.

“Kate,” my tongue tapping at the coiled skin, “let’s play nurse, ‘kay?” She let me take her into the bathroom.

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Vince Clarthough

Bio

Vince Clarthough (not his real name) is a programmer, statistician, and writer of erotica living on Oakland, California. The die rolls described in the story were generated randomly by a computer program, for added verisimilitude.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I started writing about sex because it seemed low-pressure compared to other forms of writing.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I would not feel comfortable reading my erotica to a "normal" writing group. I enjoy seeing the variety of erotica that different people in the group have written; it reminds me of the many different ways people experience sexuality.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? I do not publish under my own name and I'm sad that I can't brag on Facebook about getting published. :(

What's the inside scoop on your story? I don't remember how the original idea for "The Long Odds" came to me, but mostly worked out the details while my mother was visiting and I had to drive her to and from San Jose several times. I decided to make it an experiment in realism by generating

all those hundreds of die rolls from a computer program and basing the history of the couple around those results.

The Long Odds

Vince Clarthough

Lauren has two sixes. She squints over her glasses and wrinkles her nose to show me how serious this is.

I snicker, just to piss her off. It works. “Laugh while you can, doucheface.”

She grabs for the die, but I catch her hand in mine. She grabs with the other and I catch that, too. Her anger dissolves into horny submission, and she barely struggles when I take her ponytail in my fist and force her to kiss me. When I’m done, I slap her, just to remind her I can.

She whimpers and does her little girl voice.

“Oh, Master. You’d better hope I don’t get lucky tonight, or you’ll be in big trouble.”

She mocks me, but the odds are still five-to-one in my favor. It’s been two hundred and sixty-nine days since we last switched, and this is the seventh time she’s rolled two sixes in one night. Last time that happened was fifty-nine nights ago. She was so hungry for the third six that time; I guess she thought fate owed her.

She’s hungry for it now, too; plain as vengeance in her eyes. She makes me wish I believed in fate.

We’ve been playing this game for longer than three years now—one thousand, five hundred and eighty-five days, to be exact. Back then we were both curious about dominance and submission, but neither one wanted to be the top. So we flipped a coin. She’s got an old Eisenhower dollar we use for things like that. It turned up heads, so I had to boss her around for the night.

Speaking of which.

“Go wash the dishes, slave. You can throw your last die after you’re done.”

She starts to roll her eyes, but catches herself and gets up to do what I told her. Like a good little slave girl.

She sways her hips for me on the way to the sink.

That first night was clumsy, but we liked it enough that we flipped the coin again the next night. I won that toss, too, with tails. She won the third and fourth nights, and by then we were addicted. I came up with the game

on the fifth night. She agreed to play, and I won the coin toss to see who started on top.

Every night the bottom rolls a die. If she gets a six, she rolls again. If she gets a second six, she rolls a third time, and if that one comes up six, we switch. Every night there's one chance in two hundred sixteen that power changes hands.

But Lauren started with a run of bad luck. I stayed on top for two years, exploring my power, making her worship my cock, bake me cupcakes, change the kitty litter, whatever. I wasn't creative back then.

Lauren was creative, though. After eight hundred and five days she finally got her third six, and she put me through six months of creativity.

She bought me panties, schoolgirl-plaid, and made me wear them to work under my suit. Sometimes when I got home, she'd make me mix her a Brandy Alexander and she'd sip it while I ate her pussy, or else she'd make me dust the Venetian blinds wearing nothing but those panties. Other times she'd sit in my lap and tell me about the skinny hipster chick she used to make out with in grad school, while forbidding me from touching myself.

These thoughts excite me, so I go behind Lauren and molest her while she runs the hot water. I pinch her nipples and rub my cock on her thigh through my jeans, and she squirts more Joy into the water than she meant to.

On the one hundred and nineteenth evening of her reign, I rolled lucky. She got fucked three times that night, and not once gently. We got married in April of that year, and I got her a leash and a collar with steel O-rings. Garish, I suppose. But then, who needs subtlety when you can make your wife beg for anal sex?

To love and to cherish, and all that. I whisper hot breath in her ear. "One in six. You'll never make it." She flips me the bird.

"Asswipe."

But she only half means it. I reach under her skirt and finger her while she scrubs the forks, and she's absolutely filthy-soaking wet. Probably she's thinking about what she'll do to me when she rolls that last six. She's not the only one who gets turned thinking about that.

Three hundred and fourteen days into my second run as top, she won the roll and I had to wear the collar. Naturally, she wanted to pay me back by fucking me in the ass with a strap-on. So she started me with a little butt plug, and then she moved me up to a bigger one, and then she never got a

chance because six days later I rolled three sixes and put the collar right back on her.

Not fair in the least, but that's the kind of world we live in.

She's a good sport, which is fortunate because in total I've had the power something like seven times as long as she has. I've explained her about probability theory and independent events, the ex post facto fallacy and how the human mind insists on seeing false patterns in the outcomes of random processes, but Lauren still thinks the Fates are supreme bitches.

Once she's finished the dishes, I can't justify making her wait any longer, so I let her roll.

She stares bullwhips at me and cups the die with both hands. If she wins, she won't risk waiting even a single night before having her way with me. Not this time.

She tosses the die. It skitters across the table, bounces off the pepper mill … and comes up a four.

The End.

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Anaín Bjorkquist

Bio

Anaín Bjorkquist is a writer, speaker and wellness coach who helps women develop their subtle strength by teaching them when to turn on and when to let go. She also loves to titillate readers of her monthly newsletter, "Sex Love Joy Uncensored," by including an erotic story. Find more at anainbjorkquist.com.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? When my marriage began to fall apart, I started writing about sex publicly. At first it was extremely scary to hit publish on essays that detailed my sexual trials and triumphs, but quickly it worked better than therapy. The only difference between my sex writing/erotica and my non-erotic writing is the lack of sex. The inspiration for all my writing is my life; there are always pieces of me in every piece I pen.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? Reading pieces in writing groups usually is intimidating for me but reading in the Erotic Reading Circle is absolutely liberating! Nothing compares to bringing sex scenes alive by speaking them aloud in front of other erotica writers who eagerly await with nonjudgmental ears and succulent constructive criticism.

Do you write under your own name? One of the first things I did on the road towards defiantly cultivating my own expression of womanhood was

to start writing online without hiding behind anonymity. Being able to share my experiences as both a woman of color and a mother, knowing people knew who I was, helped me be more honest with myself and others.

What's the inside scoop on your story? This story was inspired by reality. Although not all the action in this story is true, what is absolutely TRUE is that Tina's "bag of tricks" exists and often claims victims in sunny South Florida.

My Desire for Women

Anaín Bjorkquist

My cunt has never led me astray. She usually speaks more clearly than my heart. The lovers who she doesn't like my heart also eventually grows to dislike. So, I knew that if my cunt desired women then I should follow her lead. Was I bisexual***?***! I didn't know, but I experimented with it. I thought that, just like with men, when the right "one" broke the dam in my cunt the truth about my sexuality would spill over. It was then that the Celestial Planning Goddesses sent Tina my way.

Tina was divine: a pretty face and voluptuous body. She had the most perky, full, natural breasts I had ever seen. Everything about her was fine but nothing was as gorgeous to me as the sight of Tina bent over in front of me. Her dark vulva looked back at me with a glimpse of pussy pink glowing with wetness—tempting me! Tina and I had several quick encounters at sex parties from time to time but never played together without our men. All I could do for months was fantasize about playing in Tina's box, tasting her again and figuring out if I could let go enough to enjoy sex with women as much as I dreamed that I could.

At a hotel sex party Tina cornered me, quickly placing a passionate kiss on me, causing me to open my mouth and reach into hers with my tongue. She swirled her tongue around mine then pressed her lips around my tongue. She sucked on my tongue, smacked my ass hard, then rubbed on my booty, making it all better as she pulled her mouth away from mine. My nipples hardened as she whispered something into my ear about how tonight she was going to make time for us to finally finish what we had started so many times before. My face and torso blushed from the rush of anticipation. I hoped she would follow through because all I could think about was my mouth on her pussy.

The night was just getting started. In the master bedroom a male friend introduced me to his latest girl. She was young, tall, and her skin was a light, creamy, almost golden honey color. Her short hair brought out the beauty of her big brown eyes and full lips. Everything about her matched her sweet name … Honey. She even sweetly asked me to make sure that she would be okay; this was her first sex party.

I started kissing and undressing her. She kissed back, took my top and bra off for me. I was going to make sure she was better than okay! She

asked what I wanted her to do. To her surprise I told her that what I wanted most was to watch her suck off our boy. He smiled, and she gladly got onto her knees and started sucking and spitting on his dick. I made my way onto the floor and lay on my back between her legs. My mouth was almost close enough to breathe on her clit but my head was far enough up that it allowed me to watch her taking all of him in. I rubbed on her clit over her lace panties, mimicking the speed and cadence with which she was sucking him.

When I couldn't resist the urge to taste her anymore, I pulled her panties to the side, parting her pussy lips with my tongue and plunging in until I could feel her pussy envelop my mouth. I was starting to really get into her when I felt someone down by my waist trying to pull my thong down. Yes, this was a sex party but it didn't mean it was a free for all! I slid out from in-between Honey's legs to see who was bold enough to be touching me without consent. I was about to get to cursing when my eyes focused in on Tina's.

I looked behind her and around us. As I sat up she came closer. She straddled my legs, knowing what I was thinking. She whispered, "It is just us girls. Neither of our husbands is in this room tonight. These two here only seem to be using the edge of this very big bed."

It was time to see if my cunt was right about women. I got back on the bed wearing nothing but a black thong and six-inch red stilettos. Tina went over to the dresser to get her "bag of tricks," which she brought over to the bed. Tina was known for the bag of tricks that she always brought to parties. I knew that the bag usually contained condoms, lube, and a double dong—the rest of the contents would soon be part of my carnal knowledge.

Tina let me take her dress off. She had absolutely nothing underneath but that soft dark chocolate skin, amazing breasts, and her very smooth, fully waxed, pussy and ass. Tina was great at reading my mind because in the instant I thought about my mouth and her pussy, she was already leaning me back onto a pillow to squat over my face. Her sweet wet box just inches from my face, I put my hands around her waist and brought her closer to me. I sucked on her clit as I penetrated her with two of my fingers. She moaned. I used the tip of my tongue to pull the hood of her clit back and I sucked harder. She moaned louder. I placed another finger in her as she squirmed a little.

I pulled out my fingers, exchanging them for my tongue. My nose was rubbing her clit. Her box smelled and tasted like the most sweet feminine

perfume that nature could compose. I wanted to suck every ounce of juice out of her but she had very different plans. Just as I started to get so fucking hot and wet off her taste and could almost feel myself come from pleasuring her, she stood up in the bed and turned around toward my feet. I thought, "Yes!" I was so ready for her to get into the 69 position on top of me! But she didn't.

Tina reached for the bag of tricks next to my hips and started pulling things out. She sat between the bag and me so I really couldn't see what she was preparing. She grabbed a couple of pillows from the head of the bed. She placed one over whatever she had just been messing with. She then kissed all around my pussy before pulling my thong down in the most fluid move I had ever seen. She spread my legs open, reached for the second pillow, and hinted for me to raise my bottom up so that she could place the pillow underneath me. Tina had her bag of tricks ready and had me just where she wanted.

Her mouth went toward my pussy as her hands reached up towards my breasts. She teased, pinched, and pulled at my hard nipples as her stiff tongue darted in and out of my pussy. The more I enjoyed it the rougher she would be on my nipples. My pussy was sloppy wet. I wanted more. I wanted her to have her way with me. I wanted whatever she had prepared for me underneath that pillow. Tina wasn't ready to give me that yet. She slid her hands down my inner thighs, tickling them with her long nails.

While she was sucking my clit, one of her fingers was fucking my pussy. Two fingers. Three. She removed them all, lubed them up, cuffed them close to her pinky, and she pushed all four into me. I let out a hushed scream. She laughed but continued as I kept trying to back away. She pulled out her fingers, and kissed then licked my pussy very gently. She was just making a show of playing nice for just a moment. She placed herself next to me in the bed, and pulled the hair off my face before kissing me.

Kissing her was unlike kissing anyone else before. Her breasts were touching up against mine, driving me wild with even more desire for her. I didn't know what I was supposed to really do next, so I just continued to kiss her as her hand stroked my clit. She asked if I wanted to continue. I said yes. She asked if I was open to trying whatever she had in mind. I told her that I was all hers. She smiled, winked, and went in for another kiss. We kissed for what seemed like forever. Her mouth on mine, her tongue playing

with mine, her breasts on mine, our thighs and pussies now rubbing … all of it was making me melt into that bed.

"Remember, Baby Girl, you just agreed to anything I have in mind!" Her words scared me but filled me with even more desire for Tina. Where was this going? I looked to my left, I saw Honey on all fours getting fucked by some Latino guy that obviously spent a lot more time working on his chest and arms than his abs. I saw our boy still sitting on the edge of the bed but now he had a blond riding him. The blond was moaning and yelling over to the guy with Honey asking if he was enjoying her pussy. I looked around the bed and saw several half-naked people watching, some masturbating. I was still rather new to this world so all the spectators started to make me feel uncomfortable.

I was mentally counting the number of single dudes in the room masturbating when I heard a grunt. Tina fussed at someone, and then Honey whispered. Tina was yelling at some guy that wanted to join in. Honey came over to me and started kissing my face. Tina did not like intrusive single males trying to join in during parties without consent.

This night though, Tina was too focused to let some dude ruin her good time. She was about to show him who was in charge. She pulled out the double dong from underneath the pillow and said to him, "Unless you want to share some of this with her then I advise you to back up!"

Tina reached into her bag, pulling out two condoms. She put condoms on both ends of the dong then gently commanded, "Baby Girl, will you get in position for me? Honey, why don't you come here to me."

I bent over, arched my ass up, and waited. Tina started fingering me to see if I was ready to play her game. She smiled, "Oh, you want this, don't you?" I did.

Honey's mouth was full of Tina's titty as Tina started to tease me with the dong. She rubbed it against my clit. I could feel the texture and lubrication of the condom on the dong. She went on to part my pussy lips with the dong, rubbing the tip of it up and down my vaginal opening but always went back to rub my clit. She put just the head in then pulled out. She did it again. Then she put it in fast, hard and deep. I could feel the bottom rim of the condom and I wondered how much of that dong was in me or how much had the condom rolled up? I was really scared about all of this!

She worked that dong in me slowly but firmly for a few minutes as Honey played with her pussy. I was enjoying what Tina was doing to me but I enjoyed what Honey and her were doing just as much. They started to kiss. Tina's hand slowed down as she continued to penetrate me with the toy. She pushed it harder and deeper when Honey bit her lip. She told Honey to get into position, too. Honey got on all fours directly opposite of me. Slowly she backed into the other end of the dong as Tina held it firmly for both of us.

Tina held it into place and encouraged us to enjoy ourselves. Honey and I started to let loose on the dong. I felt Tina let go of it. Honey was moaning and really getting into backing into the dong. I was nervous but her moans were forcing me into action. She thrust back. I thrust back. We kept going at it until our butts were touching. Tina kept encouraging us to keep on, then started rubbing my clit. Honey moaned louder and said Tina's name. I thought how yummy, Tina was rubbing Honey's clit, too. I let go of the anxiety I was holding on to. I worked the dong faster. I worked it deeper into me. I worked and Honey worked until not only were our butts touching but now our pussies were rubbing, too.

The feeling of the condom on the dong made it seem like a man was in me. The feeling of Honey's wetness mixing with mine drove me to the edge. I started to moan. Tina went back into her bag of tricks and pulled out some finger cots. She slipped one on each of her index fingers. She got really close to us girls. She started to rub my perineum. I assumed that everything Tina was doing to me, Honey was getting, too. That thought was so intense that I let out a moan and a tiny gush of fluid from my pussy. Tina slowly rubbed my anus with her finger. She was just tickling it all around. Gently. Slowly.

She looked at me, then looked at Honey. I felt cold lube on my ass right before Tina penetrated it with her protected finger. She rubbed my pussy through my ass. She was twirling her finger in there as Honey and I fucked ourselves and one another faster and harder. Tina was finger- fucking our asses. We were about to reach climax when Tina pulled her fingers out. Honey let out a sigh. I asked Tina to not stop as I tried my best to see how much more I could rub my pussy against Honey's wetness as that dong jammed deeper into me.

Tina wanted to remain in charge of the entire situation. She wasn't going to let me come until she was ready. Tina rubbed my booty, gesturing

for me to pull forward. She took control of the dong again and pulled it out of me. Honey gave her a sweet longing look, but Tina pulled the dong out of her, too. They kissed for a minute then Honey walked off with our friend.

I sat up in the bed and saw the crowd we had attracted. A pair of couples were on the bed near us, naked, masturbating one another as they waited for the show to continue. The scene around us scared me, but all my cunt would let me think about was coming. I focused on Tina, who was not phased by anything that was happening around us. She removed the cots from her fingers. She pulled out a wipe, cleaned her hands quickly, then went right back into her bag of tricks.

I knew it was time to just give in to her, so I got into a supine position on the bed. She got on top of me. She kissed and kissed me. She pulled out chocolate body paint and a brush. She dipped her brush into the chocolate, and my body became her canvas. She painted me with chocolate from breast to breast, then down my belly. She licked up all the chocolate that was on my outer labia. Tina kissed all around my lips without even getting close to any of the chocolate. She was missing it on purpose. She crawled back up towards me. She kissed and kissed me.

In those moments of losing myself in her kisses, I realized that I was indeed bisexual and not just curious. I had forgotten that Tina was a woman. I had forgotten I was woman. I had forgotten that we were in a room full of people watching, masturbating, fucking, and lurking. I had forgotten everything. I was totally into the act, into the pleasure, into the passion that we created together. I did not want to stop enjoying Tina and I especially wanted to please Tina. The fact that we were two women enjoying sex with one another was lost on me as I kissed her back and melted into her feminine beauty.

Tina smiled. I smiled back. She went into her bag of tricks one last time. Tina pulled out a vibrator, placed a condom on it and penetrated me with it. She worked the vibe in and out as she tenderly sucked on my clit. The vibrator was set on low. In and out. Barely in. All the way in. She used it to rub all the walls of my pussy. She then turned the vibrator on high. She penetrated me faster and harder. It vibrated as she penetrated me with it. My legs started to shake and go weak as she sucked harder on my clit. The vibrator in me at full speed, her making sure it was in as deep as it could be and her mouth loving my clit, I felt a rush run from my breasts to my cunt. My toes curled. Tina pulled the vibrator out.

She put her face deep into my pussy. Penetrating me with her tongue over and over as I came on her face. Her tongue penetrating me. My pussy lips around her mouth. It seemed like she wanted to crawl up into me, like she wanted my juices to drip into her pores. I let out a tremendous moan, the dam broke, my cunt gushed out warm wetness. My pussy and body convulsed. I only came like that when I was fully able to be myself sexually.

Tina licked up the juices out of my cunt as I squirmed. She licked up all the wetness around my pussy. She sat up. I sat up. We passionately kissed one last time before she walked out. My desire for women had left me a pleased victim of Tina's bag of tricks!

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“Fundamentally, I started writing to save my life. Yes, my own life first. I see the same impulse in my students—the queer, the mixed blood, the violated—turning to the written page with a relentless passion, a drive to avenge their own silence, invisibility and erasure as living, innately expressive human beings.”

- *Cherríe Moraga*

Avery Cassell

Bio

Avery Cassell has been creating written and visual art about sex for over 30 years. He is currently working on a memoir, an illustrated children's book, and an erotic novella.

Min-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I started writing about sex to amuse myself. Most of my writing includes sexuality or gender. My memoir includes a lot of my sexual history, and my children's picture book's focus is on being differently gendered. I tend to write lushly, so even my non-erotic writing contains much in the way of sensuous details.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? I am working on poetry, erotica, memoir, comics, and children's picture books. Each medium has a specific set of tools that propels the narrative, so I try to pick the best tool to suit the job. Besides, variety is fun.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns about publishing erotic work? I write under my own name and have done so since my 20s. I've been out for decades as an artist who works with uncomfortable subjects and sexuality. It has placed limitations upon me, but it keeps me honest.

What's the inside scoop on your story? I really did date my mother's ex, a composer of Turkish avant-garde music. I have a soft spot for both trains

and tough butch dykes, and secretly want to have a liaison on the Orient Express with a dark stranger. Call me if you want to take a train trip!

The Train Trip

Avery Cassell

I ended up traveling from Ohio to New York City with my mother's ex-boyfriend. We called him the Turk; he was from Istanbul and composed discordant, meaningful, modern music. She had dumped him for writing bad poetry and leaving it under the windshield wiper of her VW in the Indiana State University student parking lot, and he had driven to my house in Ohio in an effort to understand my mom's motivations. I couldn't tell him a lot, but did let him know that he wasn't alone and that she had dumped plenty of men. I don't know if that reassured him of his virility, but he decided that he wanted to be my boyfriend instead. He took to lying on my living room floor, listening to the Sex Pistols, and keeping me in cheap wine. I was alright with this, and when he suggested that we take a train trip to New York City, I agreed. He bought tickets, I turned a trick for spending money, copped a handful of Talwin in case I got bored, and we met at the downtown Amtrak station.

Let me be totally clear: I was not nice. I was 24, belligerent, and beautiful in a kind of faggy punk way. I had dropped out of art school and was working in a pornographic bookstore. I spent my days handing out quarters and hooking businessmen up with each other during their lunch hour, drinking take-out white Russians from a styrofoam cup, sealing dirty magazines, and reading *Crime and Punishment*. I liked to slip on a Dolly Parton wig and pretend I was a man saving up my pennies to get a sex change. It got me an amazing number of drinks in the local gay dive. I would hint demurely that I couldn't wait to get that big ole thing chopped off, my new friend's eyes would get enormous, and another drink would slide over the bar's battered wooden counter. Other times I was a skinny nelly fag with my short red hair slicked to one side and in a suit and vintage tie.

The Turk and I left on a chilly, rainy Wednesday. I had not been on a train in years and was excited. I was dressed jauntily for adventure: a 1940's olive double-breasted men's suit, a white Arrow shirt, wide silk tie, and black old lady shoes. I harbored secret fantasies involving the Orient Express, mysterious passengers, and afternoon tea, but was under no illusions about the Turk. I expected tedious monologues about the evils of capitalism, and the ability of modern music to overthrow the dominant

political paradigm, but was willing to shove drugs down my throat if he became unbearable.

We settled into our seats. They were covered in maroon tweed, and I happily sat next to the window so that I could watch the scenery. I have always loved looking out of windows when traveling, watching phone poles, trees, and towns pass by. I liked being a voyeur, especially when the object of my intent could not see me looking.

The Turk begin to talk about his latest composition; a lengthy thematic piece about the suffering of men due to their inability to experience the spiritually transformative ritual of childbirth, and the subsequent wound formed because of that lack of power of creation in their lives. He finished the explanation of his piece by smashing two hardboiled eggs together in a grand gesture involving flying egg debris. I had finally had enough. I narrowed my eyes in contempt while smiling; not the easiest facial maneuver to pull off in the best of circumstances, and made more difficult by the clashing of the of the Talwin and coffee in my system. I was pissed off that we were only in Pennsylvania, I'd already needed to take drugs, and that the Turk seemed to have endless vocal energy. I wondered if I could get away with slipping some Talwin in his beverage just to knock him out, but thought better of it. Knowing my luck, it would just make him barf and talk more slowly, and then I'd be stuck with a vomitous, smelly, and even more ponderous Turk.

I stood up, announced that I needed to go to the restroom, and walked down the narrow train aisle to the end of the car. The train swayed gently, making me conscious of my hips. Standing opposite the restroom door was a woman. She leaned nonchalantly against the wall, smoking a cigar, her black boots spread just far enough apart to make me aware of the line of her thighs as they met at her crotch. She was wearing a worn black leather jacket, tight black jeans, and a white tee-shirt; a butch Marlon Brando, one of my favorite jerk-off types. Her salt and pepper hair was cut close, and she had sensuous curly lips, a square jaw line, and blue eyes. She looked directly at my mouth, and then her gaze traveled down from my neck over my chest, hips, and down my legs. She then looked up unswervingly into my eyes, winked, and vigorously ground out her cigar with her boot heel. Her eyes sparkled with electricity. I gasped. She leaned into the wall, hitching her hip up into a swagger, and then pushed forward to where I stood, one of my hands on the restroom door. We stared at one another. She

was incredibly hot, and I'd never fucked in a train restroom. I smiled, bit my lip in anticipation, opened the restroom door, and nodded at her to follow me. We walked into the restroom and locked the door with the metal slide-latch with a smooth click.

I turned to her to make one of my typical somewhat snarky come-ons, but she was on to me. She quickly shoved me over to the sink, keeping her leather clad hands on me until my ass was resting against the faux pink marble. The sink was stained and there was a faint odor of cheap pine disinfectant in the air. The room was small and felt kind of hollow, like a cave. It would probably be a great place to practice yodeling, if that was what you needed to do during a long train trip with a boring Turk. It was beginning to look like a great place to fuck, too. I was finding it hard to breathe. I had come to think of this woman as "Marlon," and Marlon had me firmly by the upper arms, with her knee jammed between mine, spreading my thighs apart. She loosened her grip with one hand, unknotted my tie and started to unbutton my shirt. I was getting wet and squirmy, but every time I wiggled, the hard edge of the sink reminded me of my precarious perch. She gave a little whistle when she saw the dog tag engraved with "Sir" hanging on a chain between my breasts. She growled and nipped at my shoulder, pulling my Boy Scout belt out of my pant's belt loops in one long swing. I love the sound of a belt being quickly removed, and the whoosh of the belt made my knees buckle just a little. Reaching around, Marlon tied my wrists together behind my back in an impromptu knot, the brass buckle dangling against the sink counter.

She looked at me, smiled wolfishly, leaned forward and kissed me once, pulling my lower lip out with her teeth. I leaned into her helplessly, unable to grab her with anything other than my legs and mouth. She yanked at my belt, which dug into my forearms each time I tried to get closer. I wanted to take off her tee-shirt so I could see her breasts, and contemplated trying to rip the shirt off with my teeth. It looked easy enough to do in the movies, but every time I tried to grab at her shirt with my teeth she growled softly and slapped me. The slaps felt like some kind of tropical flower blossoming under my skin; a quick retort and then spreading heat. It was becoming way too easy to forget my intentions to remove her clothing. The cold faux marble was heating up against my ass. I wanted to open up my ass cheeks and rub my asshole against the counter. I tried to move my wet cunt closer to something, anything. Every spot in my body, every bit of

skin, felt so tender and needy. I felt like a cat in heat, but couldn't get any relief. She had my arms tied back, and although she had my legs spread, she was being very careful not to let my cunt touch anything. She started growling and biting my breasts. My legs were shaking in jerky movements by now, but Marlon was determined to prevent me from getting the stimulation that I desperately wanted. Each breath I expelled became a question, and that question was, "When will you fuck me? When will you fill me?" She pulled abruptly at the belt, causing the brass buckle to clang noisily against the counter top, and causing me to moan in anticipation. The sounds bounced around the small room.

Unexpectedly, she fell into me and wrapped both arms around me, warming my back and sides. I could smell her armpits and their sexy odor, so close to the fragrance of an aroused cunt that all I wanted was to wrap my legs around her waist and pull her inside of me. Suddenly we started kissing. Our lips matched exactly, and we threw ourselves into the kiss with our entire bodies. We kissed using our lips, our tongues, and our breath. I could feel the sharp bristles of her faint moustache, and rubbed it against my lip, letting the poky hairs send electric waves of desire to my cunt. I must have groaned especially loudly, because the next thing I knew she had her leather gloved hand cupped over my still-pantied cunt. I groaned, "Please." She pressed little harder, and smiled devilishly. She was pushing full on against me, but it was impossible for me to move any closer or control her movements. I was extremely frustrated. And I will let you know right now that just because I wear a tag that says "Sir" does not mean that I don't get what I want, and usually when I want it! OK, sure, she was exceptionally hot, but there are limits, and I was reaching mine. I sighed and wiggled more, trying to tempt her into touching my wet cunt.

Just then, Marlon reached over and pulled my panties to one side. I saw a flash of metal. She had materialized a little pocket knife out of nowhere, and was slicing through the crotch of my underwear. I was having a difficult time deciding whether to rock my hips up towards the blade, or stay as still as possible to avoid any unintended damage to my bits. The choice made me whimper and twitch, but she cut my panties open quickly, leaving the knife to fall to the tiled floor. As the knife fell, Marlon's fingers parted my labia and she plunged one finger into my dripping cunt. Alternatively slapping my face and twisting my nipples, she added a second finger. I was trying to fuck her back, grunting as I thrust my hips up and grabbing her

fingers with my cunt. I wanted her inside, as deeply as she could go. I could feel her adding more fingers, and I bucked up against her hand, begging her to fuck me. She was still growling, and my dog tag dangled between us. By now, she was slapping my breasts, while twisting her hand inside of me. Each slap made me gasp as I opened myself to her. I was opening my chest, my cunt, my mouth, my voice. All I wanted in life, in this moment, was this glorious fuck in this dingy rolling train bathroom; my cunt surrounding her hand, she fucking me and me fucking her. I thought about growly bears and Kathy Acker and the song she sang about the blood of his rose. I fucked Marlon's hand as if we were on our way to another planet, and we were bears or dogs or some animal, something dangerous and inflamed. Her hand fucked me, and I felt my belly roll, spasms of fuck energy passing up through me as I roared and came. My cunt tightened with a gush of wet spilling up and over.

As soon as I could catch my breath, I started giggling. Marlon was smiling, too. We held one another, slowly becoming re-acclimated to the train bathroom. She untied the belt from my arms, and filled a paper cup with water for me. My throat was sore and rough from so much carrying on, my panties lay in tatters on the spotty floor, and there was a wet spot on my trousers. Her tee-shirt was un-tucked, with a large damp spot in the center. She helped me pull my pants up, I tucked in her shirt for her, and we shared a smoke in the bathroom. We both washed our hands of our sex smell. The mirror was cracked along one side, and there were phone numbers and messages written on the wall next to the toilet. We didn't say much, but once we were done smoking, we left the restroom together. I waved bye; she turned left and I turned right.

I made my way unsteadily back to the Turk. He picked up his monologue where he'd left off, later demonstrating the subtleties of the modern avant-garde Turkish movement by complicated paper napkin folding and burning. Fucking Marlon got me through to New York City without having to take any more Talwin. You know, not to get all philosophical or anything, but sometimes a fuck is just a fuck, and sometimes a fuck is a reminder of the power of life. This was one of those reminder fucks. I kind of wished that we'd exchanged numbers, or at least left messages for one another on the restroom stall wall, but we didn't do either. Anyway, every time I see a train, I think of Marlon and I get hot as hell.

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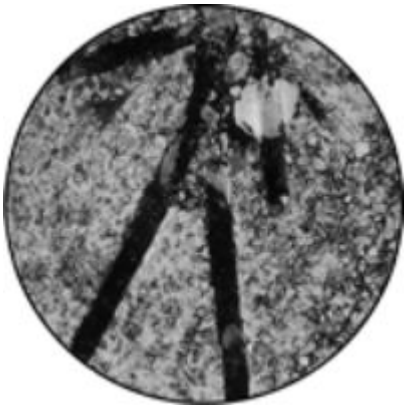
“I think the one thing I want to say about my writing is that I really do it to give voice to certain kinds of sexual diversity and sexual desire and pleasure, and I don’t pretend that I cover the waterfront, so if anybody is listening out there and has ever thought, I don’t see very much of this thing in print, [whisper] start to write!”

- *Carol Queen*

Scott Bentley



Bio

Scott Bentley's most recent book is a collection of photography and text: *All Around Noise*: *Studies in Framing*, *Synecdoche* and *Juxtaposition* (Cariuna, 2014). Some of his translations appear in *New American Writing* (#18 Lies about the Truth, 2000) and *The Pip Anthology of World Poetry of the 20th Century* (Vol. 3)—*Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain*: *20 Contemporary Brazilian Poets* (Green Integer, 2003). Poems appear in *580 Split*, *and/or*, *Chain*, *Fact-Simile*, *Lyric&*, *New American Writing*, *Otoliths*, *The Raddle Moon*, *Rampike*, *Syllogism*, *Vanitas*, and other publications. Bentley has an MA (UC San Diego) and an MFA (Mills College). He teaches at California State University East Bay.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? As I see it, in the end every thing holds some relation to eros; as such, most of my writing has some sort of erotic twinge, but I started writing this particular piece more or less on a dare.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? I'm not too sure that I acknowledge genre in any real way. Writing's writing. Good prose, in fact, starts as poetry. I'm not patient enough to believe in time, and stories require that belief in time: beginning, middle, end. As such, well, the story arc's something I don't know much about. My latest book, *All Around Noise*: *Studies in Framing*, *Synecdoche and Juxtaposition* (Cariuna, 2014) is a photo/word collage. Moreover, if you take something like the Brazilian

martial art of capoeira, well, what is it exactly***?*** A dance, a song***?*** Genre's a mistake. We all ought to look toward becoming cross- dressers to freedom.

Swirl

Scott Bentley

Excerpt from Swirl:
Pro-
Noun
per (Voice

en Trapeze

by Scott Bentley

… after a while I slip out of your nuance.

You rise up and turn around, stern toward me.
And you lock back down onto this narrowly, now
resurrected cock. His vigor becomes the site of the
falling out, the look we parted, giggling, between
friends. Dazzle me with your girly throw
and catch.

Let us wed and then, if you wish
make game on the world

while I, alone, explore things.

///

We anoint your cock awakening before us.
We can see the head widen and thicken. I can't resist.
I have to try you. Your potlatch in my mansion droves
lost ranger in the backseat. I lust to pull you inside
me, fuck you everywhere.

Slurplick and delightful. A distant harass.
Or the wing of a hummingbird twang.

///

O, how I want your girlycunt your girlhalf bad boy.

O, slap it. Slap it against my eyelids, against my
ass. Slap it, until she throbs and pauses. Tingly wiggle
seeks sloppy red fuck pole.

///

… and I think. Finding your spot I listen
to your groundswell fathoming this freedom, so silly

as you peer up at the mirror. Upon entrance, I tongue you
into a babble. Uncover the fossils, the facets. She can see
it all, the last lick and cuddle: the century
in chocolate. Chipotle.

I, now can form a question. Do you swear not to tell?
Wrapped up so cute and I, like your balls, my ass,
am in

your panties, boxers.
This battleground. Undress us …

///

And then with a plunder to peel
back the prick. Already, the early sunrise.
Track around her wattage, deeply and hard. Harder. To
worship at the porch-light of your tribe, strapping.

From under a veil we reveal your itchy-bitchy dick.
Flick it, quickly like a nipple. I stick her just a bit
and blanket planks across his fledgling girth, queer
across the benchpress. How you must between those

painted fingertips pinch-hit. I want

you, a space in bed to polish with wine stain splurges
as we writhe, writing us

up, looking
to be reminded

just exactly where to hold on.

    Grip us together
    tighter, still.

///

    My cock can’t ever, quietly, and quite
know the limits. To scream and then flare up, slowly.
I show myself out before you invite me back in,
bring your profligate down to this level, hinting.
A salacious scene let’s work out into

    (You’re not—I gather—any longer
    shy in my demise.)

the magnet of the tide gone west
with every wild sense, saloon. Lick and suck
that scampi tramp while I frolic

at the ridges
    with a girl’s tongue.

///

    If you could you’d swallow
me, make me yours. But physics and gravity defy.
Our cocks already nearly ruined
the pomegranate split apart in the squab

territories, down over the squalid

juices, flooding your fingers
sticky seedlings.

… regions hard as glass. Her legs wrapped around

his neckline with palms on the bed she leans to. Rush
me, wanting me further and harder inside this rusty
mood. You pound and muster.

We kiss, fainting. Trust.

///

The only one on the runway clad in clear neon jet.
What if our pussies were sun spots among flowers?
Huddled in a puddle

gritty swank to mandate

a satellite constellates my classmate. Like two lovers,
shy, in a ritual acquaintance of bodies, bookends.
The curve of a spine, stuttering at that …

little freckle
just off the banks on
onto her Psalms
secret spasms

the way he rises to accept my mouth.

///

Breathless, you say “Fuck me”
in a whisper; yes, no avoiding the strength of our retro
interiors of secret obsession in depths of understanding

that for millennia have brought us to these extremes, one

body needing to come into another—as if, for but
a second, beauty, to merge a machine, pumping, one
only, gasping for air, for more—born again and again,
direct and singular in loss, gaping, endlessly.

///

Today I almost came right in front of the
Gap. Right there on the sidewalk. I just want to float
in this lustpuddle and bathe you at night in my pussy
dump.

Get a purchase and grind ‘til I lay there so far
… you’ll lose your ground.

My pulse busting sockets, waiting for his dick, his
digits, his blanks on my gauge to recover. Dizzy into
fellows. It’s difficult to say, the possibilities of measure
seem so numerous. To please my baritone drop that
speed-o.

///

Hold on tight. X marks the spot! I’ll have to let
go now and then I twist with my teeth. Let’s say we pack
my satchel while you draw my page. I kneel at the torture
in my mouth, the dirty flinch. And we feel lost as my
hand fits, trembly, around her terrible mounds. Yet I
know where to go, instantly.

Let’s together sit nude on the king-sized duvet, your
hair put up in a white towel.

///

Whether it’s so soon along, or

full-fledged we handle her ass, sweet lady
your labia in labia: a continent inside, alias,
tease me. Euphoric at the fact that with a single
stroke, you find the exact key.

… ajar, the doors. Half asphyxiated, stumble out
out of the bedroom, onto the balcony of starlit
nights like these.

///

I want through a broken window to watch
you dine inside me. The bridge of your nose slightly
wrinkled, project expansion. Another golden gate.
Sun on cunt.

Just to let in a single ray. Balmy. Perfect origami. If
I should barely dangle it between index and thumb,
ivory translucence spins. Pretty in the afternoon.

Yes, I want
a long dress made from this.

///

You’re reading. Honeysuckle in the gentle
breeze, the bees and wild calls of a jay. You’re sitting
in a chair, out on the lawn, in a country frock, taking
some leisure, legs crossed, barefoot.

My shirt’s undone. You unbuckle your polity.
It’s getting pretty warm on the Cape

this summer I’ll dampen your lust
my shades in satins once you dawn

… just to cool down above mid-thigh at lift-off

As you slink up your dress I sneak a look, note, on
this morning, unshowered beneath you have no

gin spilled. Over my Ray Bans, I do declare, until, finally
she takes notice. Who's there in the foyer? To glance
at the hemline up your mini—nanny, feline—
as we smile.

///

The puff of your femininity, coiffed. Piss titty clit
pretty girl. A woman like you can change the course
of history, make a day sway chipper that much more.
Damage in carnage, the arrangement off our garage

my mouth a mass of dick and balls
twister, a dapper hurricane.

///

My garlic tongue inside your candy stench.
One never knows who might pick up the phone
at your house. Everything sparkles, startling

in the rainy fronds. The luckiest plucks flunky
in memory. I recall a day when we all with delight

twilled pistols little in your sticky honesty, a lonely
trick. Wound in twine, particulars—

happily pink, darkling lavender. Simile major
I ponder stripes, quit. Pond grant.

///

Your center-fold innocent of hair,
your lower-most terrain in the same hue as those
purply layers of gush. A fascination in wonder curves.
You flower out, wafting. Watch me change color.
My pool of languid grace on increase at the hearth of
warmth. Astounding, every time!

Astonish me, mister. Tonight, your grace
positions make way to the flattering sway
of our astronomy.

She sprays he spray by the she sore. Tempt
me. Sit on my gash and face the wilds out of me,
darlin'. My lick slitty slut. Let me stack your ginger
digs on in. Paper-thin lips, flower petals to petit mille-
fois. Cum blossom.

///

The lark-grey the philatelists flew in. Piano planets.

I travel the sides—recto and verso—
with a pout-y attraction to take to her. She'd swoon
on and on and from time-to-time rip, ferocious as far
as she could go nether this chemistry, upward.

This lullaby lulling us, behind her lush
streams these busy, busy men.

Rock candy, flamingos aflame. Stamp tango.

///

… and thought of you, thought of how you
wouldn't, if you were here, clench your mandate
when I do like that; how you would open slender

instead; how you would with both hands render my
squad car, my sad marquee

as we ease along your parkside blvd.

In a show of force, shove my head
between milestones that I may lap at your pecker
shaker, spillage of spun drip I drink you into morning
on this date, rippling, sucking. I'm throbbing.

///

The plump fruit
I swamp

at the icebox
door, unhinge

your rigid
gooseflesh

Forgive us.

///

I want with these keys to tap out a poem on the softest
part of your English. I want to sup until the words
disappear, to write with a brush dipped

in cherry juice hollows and sperm spree

instead of hallowed ink. Let's memorize
your address and never speak again. The wells of
your salts, all the way to the lower surge. Your buttery
sauces, engorging

peek just outside, molten as she moves in

your midst, fold after fold.

To part the separation with her tongue, seeking
the panther cave, vanishes. King me.

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“Sex is something most adults humans have done or have thought about doing and so it’s a common, even banal, space from which to write. But to do it well one has to make it particular. Has to find it’s meaning. Sex is always deeply intimate, even if the characters aren’t involved in an intimate relationship. It’s bodies going inside other bodies, it’s laying the self bare and it’s also a performance. It seems to me that to write sex well one has to know the characters intimately … even if they don’t know each other intimately. One had to know their fears, their hopes for themselves and the other person—even the hopes and fears that they don’t know. You have to figure out how much of the character’s sex is performance and how much is unfiltered and why—even when the characters don’t. And of course, this is what you need to know about your characters even if they’re not fucking. Writing sex might be a kind of exercise for creating character in any context.”

- *Tiphanie Yanique*

Erin M.

Bio

I have always been inspired by the erotic impulse, such as being enthralled as a young adult by scenes in movies or discovering a simpatico with erotic writing like that of Anais Nin. I grew sexually of age while Madonna rose to the top and once ran around my country town in a bra. As I grew older, the path of unashamed passionate sexual exploration and counter-culture has been an integral part of my life. Attending the Erotic Reading Circle gave me an outlet to make my own erotica.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? Ever since I was a teenager I enjoyed reading erotica anthologies. They were informative and inspiring to me. I started dabbling, writing erotica here and there in notebooks, not thinking that I could write—that somehow I needed some special training. When I found the Erotic Reading Circle and got feedback, it encouraged me to write for real. Also with the Internet and blogging, I found more ways to put myself out there as a writer.

How does it differ from non-erotic writing? You have to worry more about the stigma of what you write about with sex, whether or not to have a pseudonym and how people will see you if you share that you write about sex. You can't share it with your parents. Well, you could …

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? The Erotic Reading Circle is a safe place to bring your work, whether it's something

you want to publish or a relationship or sexual experience/ desire cleverly disguised as “fiction.” Reading my writing at ERC helps me keep writing since I know people enjoy what I’ve put together. I went to a regular writing group for a stint and it felt like they didn’t get the kinky themes in my work.

What’s the inside scoop on your story? I started writing this story on a quiet holiday when I had made no plans with anyone and instead of feeling sorry for myself I decided to get creative. One of the characters was based on a real guy I had an encounter with around that time. It was healing for me to write him into the story. It also involves something very sexy: anal sex.

Back in the Saddle

Erin M.

"So here's the deal: I'll fuck your ass if you fuck mine. You want it bad enough."

"I know you would rather be fucked by me and be a little slut bottom boy, but tough, you have to fuck *me* in the ass."

Even though I was giving the hard line, my lips parted to kiss Nick on the mouth while I roughly grabbed his balls through his cotton slacks. Nick kissed me back hard and I could feel the space in-between my legs start to get hot.

"You know I love to fuck you, but please … I need you to give it to me, I've been a very bad boy." He was unbuttoning my blueish calico dress and exposing my black bra and leather harness, already ready for the scene. Nick got down on his knees, pushed the harness away (I hadn't put in the cock yet; needless to say, you can't go out to dinner like that, all jutting out), and started tonguing my pussy.

"Oh yes … like that, oh that's it." I looked down at my sandy- haired lover craning his neck to get around the harness. "Oh yeah, be a good boy for me, keep doing that. Oh yeah …"

Nick had become a total ass slut. Ever since we tried me fucking him with a dildo, he couldn't get enough. He was driving me crazy. What happened to my man I could rely on to fuck *me*, over and over, anytime, any place? Where did our sex life go? He still got me off—mostly, just like he was doing right now—just so he could get me turned on enough to fuck his round white ass.

"You are a little fag, that is what you are," I told him. "Willing to bend it over and take it." Work had been tough and this new game made him feel better. He agreed with me that he had become quite a bottom in the bedroom. What about me and my ass fucking? I like to be penetrated, too. Where did my friend, the real cock, go?

"Why don't you just get it over with and go down to The Stud or wherever, find some pretty boy and get fucked in the ass?" I knew he thought about it. He confided that this was his go-to at-work space out fantasy.

"But you are pretty and you smell good. And, I want *you* to fuck me," Nick replied, meekness hiding his inner clarity while staring up at me with

his big blue eyes. I sighed and stroked the silicone cock. We were sitting in the breakfast nook last Sunday discussing his obsession.

He came over to my chair and I could smell the coffee we had just drunk on his breath. He knelt down, parted my legs and pulled me forward by grabbing the purple silicone. I scooted my butt forward and let him part my pussy lips under the harness mound. “You are wet,” he said, stroking up and down and exploring inside me.

“Wet? What are you talking about? Boys don’t get wet, they get hard.” I pushed his head towards my cock, inviting him to suck it. Nick looked up at me, a greedy, hungry boy waiting for more encouragement. I grabbed the back of his head and pushed him onto my dick, letting him suck it for all he was worth. Needless to say, he was lubed up soon after that.

We lay in bed after we fucked and he had shot buckets all over himself instead of inside of me. I had grabbed my Gigi vibe and came hard after pulling off the harness and pressing the vibe into my groin, anxious for release. Nick had collapsed on the bed in la la land, just like a girl, and I wasn’t about to wait around.

“So do you think this is like some weird penis envy thing, leftover from your childhood? You couldn’t play with the big boys so now you’re into cock?” I stared at the ceiling, slightly exhausted from pumping into him. Nick had started to be alert again after cuming and finally reached for me.

“No,” he replied, all of sudden getting quiet. Being girlish again, I thought. He won’t just spit out what’s going on. He grabbed me and drew me to him and we spooned, falling asleep for awhile.

This had been going for two months now, the me fucking him. It was right about the time there was that work party. Nick had just been promoted to project supervisor and the new guy, Matt, had taken his old job. I talked with Matt at the party. He was a tech cutie with nerdy glasses and broad shoulders. Nick made the rounds, chatting everyone up, so I entertained myself. Matt was fun to talk to. He was telling me about how traveling around the world made him get out of corporate and into non-profit.

After awhile Matt suggested we sneak outside and get stoned. Nick was chatting with the board of directors, so I followed Matt outside and around the side of the building. He had a little brown pipe prepared for the occasion. We both took a hit and stared at each other across the alley. He said that smoking pot almost always made him horny and it was a shame that he was at a work function. I stared at the ground and then looked up

and accidentally stared at his crotch. The sun was hot on my arms and face. I wondered what Nick would think about Matt and I getting stoned at the work party. All of a sudden I felt nervous. I looked at Matt's thighs, noticing how muscular they were. "One time, while I was in Thailand, I met this German girl with long brown hair just like yours. All we did for a week was get high on Thai weed and then she would fuck me with a cock that she carried around in her backpack."

I started thinking why was he telling me all this and maybe I should get back inside, when Nick popped his head out the rusty-colored door, saw me and smiled, and then frowned when he saw Matt and how glossy his eyes were.

Later, at home after the party was over, Nick grilled me about what was so interesting about Matt, not thrilled about sharing turf.

"I don't know, we were just talking, no big deal. I guess he likes it up the ass."

"He what?" Nick asked, turning around to look me in the face: kind of smiling, kind of not.

"He told me he spent a week in Thailand once, smoking pot and hanging out with some German girl and her dildo."

"He told you this, while at the party? Well, he quickly passed the appropriate work conversation boundary."

"He told me that her hair was like mine, long and brown".

"He did? What the hell, he's into my project and now he's into you. What the fuck?" Nick just scowled off into the other room, but I knew in the following weeks, things had become more tense at work then they needed to be.

I came home one day and Nick was sitting on the couch in the front room, his laptop on the table, his pants unzipped, his cock out and in hand. His body jolted slightly and he let go of his penis when he saw me come in. "I thought you weren't going to be home till nine."

"The class was canceled, so I did some shopping downtown and came home. What are you watching, porn? You dirty bastard."

He reached for the computer and I grabbed it. "What are you watching, baby? Maybe I'll like it."

I was faster than him because I didn't have my pants down. I looked at the pictures splattered across the screen. Women in tight clothing and high heels fucking grown men in the ass with plastic dicks.

“Since when have you been into this?”

“I don’t know, I just think it might feel good,” Nick replied, taking the computer from me and setting it back down on the coffee table. He walked over to the closet and pulled out a bag.

“I was actually hoping you might lend me a hand.” He gave me the bag and I looked inside. There was a harness and not one, but three dildos, all different sizes. We had used some toys on me during oral sex and sometimes I put a finger in his ass, but we had never discussed pegging. Nick always told me he loved fucking me, being on top, pulling up my leg on his shoulder and seeing his cock slide in and out of my pussy. He loved cuming inside and collapsing on my body and then kissing me after he came. We had talked about hot threesome fantasies but he made it very clear he was the fucker. So this came as a bit of surprise.

Fast forward two months and this is where we are now. I am not going to fuck him in the ass unless he does the same to me. Nick had gotten so into being bent over on the couch or on the bed, I wondered if his ass was getting stretched out. I was getting a back problem. At first it was fun. It was different, novelty. I liked gently easing all the way into his ass and fucking him slowly while I put my whole weight on his back and reached around to touch his nipples. Nick’s nipples were so sensitive and I swear he would almost cum right then and there when I twisted them. I’d move down to his cock and stroke him while my hips pumped away against his.

I had gotten more stingy, though, and he had gotten more sissy. I asked my girlfriends if they were fucking their boyfriends. None of them were; in fact, some of them weren’t having sex at all. If they were it was like sweet, go-to-sleep sex.

We were in bed and he was on all fours. The sheets were the new 600-count cotton white ones I’d gotten on sale at Macy’s. I was fucking him again. At least my knees were comfortable, the sun was out and we had the day off. I was naked, too much bother for the outfits. I had my hands on his hips and I was sweating, eyes closed, grinding away at his ass. I felt him grab my hand and groan and I realized he wanted me to give him the reach around. I didn’t. I paused and backed out a little and then slammed the cock almost all the way inside of him and waited. He groaned again and I pulled the cock almost the way out again, just leaving the very tip inside.

“Baby, please, don’t stop,” he whispered.

“What are you going to do for me?” I countered, slamming the cock back in.

“I’ll do it, I promise. I’ll fuck you in the ass, whatever you want, just don’t stop.” I had stopped and I was fully impaled, probably pressing on his prostate pretty hard.

I pulled all the way out, unbuckled the harness and stepped out of it. I put it on the chair next to the bed. Nick had turned over on the white sheets and his dick was hard and sticking straight up and he was staring at me, naked in front of him. “I forgot how beautiful you are.”

“You see me every day, fool.”

“No really, we have been doing it so much in my ass, I haven’t had a chance to look at you, all curvy and shit. Come here.”

I climbed on to the bed and he pulled me to him, kissing me on the lips hard. He turned around and eased on top of me. I reached out and caressed his arms, my hands tracing through his hair, relaxing even more into the soft bedding. I looked up at him while he put his swollen cock at the entrance to my pussy and he slid in, us both shuddering.

“This is just a warm up, you know,” he said while thrusting into me. I moaned deeply. God, it had been so long since we did it this way.

“I am going to give you what you want.” His arms grabbed my shoulders, his lips vibrated at my neck, while his pelvis pressed into mine.

“You are?”

“Yeah. I can tell you need a good ass-fucking.” He stared into my eyes with a half smile, knowing that we were still playing the game but the tables had shifted themselves back into a more balanced place.

And with that my man climbed back in the saddle, squirted some lube into my ass and slowly inched his way in to our hearts’ content.

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“It was fun to dream up, and fun to work on, too. Writing pornography is its own reward, delirious self-indulgence compounded by the orderly pleasures of making sentences and paragraphs. I still sometimes reread my own porn, because I don’t have to browse around it looking for the good parts. My stuff is all good parts—for me. When one of my characters tells my hapless heroine that he knows what she wants, that’s me—writer and dominant—talking to me, reader and eager submissive.”

- *Molly Weatherfield*
(author of Carrie’s Story*)*

Simone Corday

Bio

Simone Corday is the author of *9½ Years Behind the Green Door: A Mitchell Brothers Stripper Remembers Her Lover Artie Mitchell, Hunter S. Thompson, and the Killing that Rocked San Francisco, a Memoir* (2007). She has written for HSTbooks.org, a Hunter Thompson resource, and is working on a novel. Her website is www.greendoorbook.com.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I danced at the Mitchell Brothers' O'Farrell Theater for nearly ten years, took part in three of the brothers' films, and was a girlfriend of O'Farrell co-owner/pornographer Artie Mitchell. I experienced this insular world from several different points of view. I had an interest in writing and an MA in English before I became a dancer, and the drama and stories that unfolded in this setting fascinated me.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I found the Erotic Reading Circle after I finished my book and was ready to read parts of it aloud and see how an audience would react. Jen and Carol are very supportive, kind, and helpful mentors, as well as being experienced writers. The group is friendly and positive, and makes constructive comments. It is interesting to hear the work of other writers, and some of the writing is outstanding.

What's the inside scoop on your story? What inspired it? This section, from Chapter 6 in my book, introduces a few main characters in January 1986, including Artie and Jim Mitchell, and the main setting of my memoir, the O'Farrell Theater. The entire book begins in the early 80's just before AIDS, and we are behind the scenes at the entrancing Mitchell Brothers' O'Farrell Theater, which gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson has declared to be "the Carnegie Hall of public sex in America." The theater and its steamy live shows are a countercultural gathering place for celebrities in entertainment and sports, and for San Francisco politicians and journalists. They are drawn by the beautiful strippers and the backroom hospitality of their outrageous porn king hosts, Artie and Jim Mitchell—who directed the groundbreaking porn film, *Behind the Green Door*, starring Marilyn Chambers.

The Spirit of the O'Farrell

Simone Corday

Excerpted from Chapter 6: Hunter's Defiant Note, and Double Trouble: The Mayor vs. the Senate Page in *9½ Years Behind the Green Door*

January 18, 1986

Three months after being laid off, I got a message on my machine from the O'Farrell. I called Vince in the morning. He said, "Jim asked me last week, 'Whatever happened to Simone?' So he'd like to have you back, and I don't think Art would object too much. What you should do is come down here and catch the two of them together. Call me this afternoon and maybe they'll be back by then."

I talked to my two best friends for strategy and dressed with care—as hot as I could but with a serious conservative edge befitting an accused—black suede Yves St. Laurent heels, marquisette pin, black jacket, short red dress to show off my legs. Spraying on a discreet amount of "Paris," I tried to summon up a smile in the mirror. With long dark hair and green eyes, I still looked too serious and idealistic, for a stripper. Clearly reflected in the glass was an ex-schoolteacher with an addiction to the outrageous. Unmistakably, I was a woman who was old enough to know she was deeply in love.

I felt a sea of mixed emotions. Being away from the place for awhile had given me a clearer perspective. Now I knew that walking into the O'Farrell was like crossing a border into a principality as foreign as Shangri- La, with its own unique customs, and a constantly changing party-line point of view that necessitated denial. Jim and Art Mitchell were kings there, and games were played for power. Women were encouraged to prove how hot and uninhibited they were, while the men measured their sexuality by their number of conquests. Once I stepped back through those doors, I had to deal with life on their terms, no matt how fanciful, harsh, or strange it might seem. Once I was within Mitchell territory, I'd be living on X-rated time.

I was going back. There was no question about it. I drove shivering with fear, keeping a sudden sense of nausea in check. Dealing with a pair of countercultural entrepreneurs bent on a pornographic crusade wasn't easy.

Would I get to tell my side of what led to the argument? I wondered. What would they do to try to make me crawl? Everyone had to do some penance to come back to the O'Farrell—it's a ritual, and part of the game. Thinking, they're not going to break *me*, and thinking, what more could happen, what do I have to lose? And thinking, I haven't been this broke in the last five years, I pushed open a mirrored glass door and felt the slightest chill.

Inside the plush lobby, past the box office and the king-size fish tanks, was the staircase to the executive offices of Mitchell Brothers. Moving past the photo of a sleek Marilyn Chambers used to promote *Behind the Green Door*, I ventured in on the thick green carpet of the inner sanctum. Vince, tall with wavy brown hair, sat behind the roll- top desk from which he cleverly administered the entire operation. He was Machiavellian, yet at times benevolent; feared, yet cultivated by the dancers; implicitly loyal to the brothers and adept at defending them. "Simone, you came at a good time," Vince greeted me. "They're in there." "Simone, it's good to see you," said Dan O'Neill, notorious since the 60s as an underground cartoonist, and longtime O'Farrell groupie. A disreputable hat, irreverent overgrown mustache, and long hair heightened his whimsical expression. Just beyond him was Rocky, Art and Jim's bearded cousin, a tough-looking quiet good old boy, who worked there as a janitor.

Three dancers in lacy lingerie, rhinestones and heels, perched on the edge of the pool table. The pretty California girl-next-door types, whose clean-cut image and sexy magnetism have been so essential to the success of all Mitchell Brothers' productions.

Jim Mitchell was just inside the door. They were having a drunken spaghetti feed and had already half-eaten a dried-up, out-of-season game bird they shot early that morning, to destroy the evidence. A faint odor of marijuana hung in the air.

"Simone, you're back," Jim turned toward me, steel-eyed. Ralph Lauren casual, he was bald with a trim mustache, slightly overweight but powerful, a man who clearly savored the accouterments of success, and his position of authority. Half-drunk at the moment, Jim was seductively forceful in his touch. Referring to my argument with Missy, Jim stated, "In these cat fights the rule of thumb is, both kitties have to go because it disrupts things for the other kitties. It doesn't matt who started it." Jim sounded typically sarcastic, but was relishing the King Solomon aspects of his role that day, having been able to banish, being able to pardon, "But you

have friends in high places. And since Christianity, we believe in giving a guy a second chance, so we'd like to have you back. Art, Simone's here."

"Party Artie," devastating, bearded and slender, walked over with the assured style of an outlaw, and gave me a kiss. It's polite. I didn't want it polite—I wanted it passionate. Art kept love intense and compelling, he was a flawless player in control of an ever-changing, unfolding game. A game I had to win. I followed him longingly with my eyes down to the other end of the pool table. Art stretched out on the floor like an animal, on top of one of those padded cloths used to cover packing crates.

"Help yourself …" Jim suggested. "Have some spaghetti."

Vince came in. "Yeah, you can have some of that," he snickered, pointing to a paper plate of parsley.

O'Neill helped me to a serving of this horrible white spaghetti, red sauce with bird gizzard cooked into it, which I felt I had to taste as some kind of sacramental gesture. The girls were looking through the new *Playboy* and pointed out a small photo. "Oh, there's Missy. Miss Congeniality." Missy—the kitty who had me fired.

The office looked the same—it was dominated by the pool table, fishing relics, mementos, and a poker table reminiscent of Art and Jim's Depression-era, Okie gambler father, J.R. Mitchell, who schooled them well in living outside the law.

Art got up off the floor, came over to me, and said, "I want some of that pussy," in his rich Oklahoma drawl, lawless, always melted me completely. I put my plate down and followed him down the hall, into a scene from one of his movies.

He closed the door softly, then pulled me onto his lap, and I told him, "I really missed you."

"No," Art said, as I looked into his sultry indecent brown eyes, "you mean you love me."

He pulled my red dress up and slipped into me, while pressing his head to my breast, "Keep your mouth shut and I'll fuck you in secret," he said. Fat chance. "Be the slave to love that you are, Simone," he said, stealing a line from the dreamlike Bryan Ferry hit song.

"I still love you, Art," I said as he was coming. "I'll always love you." "Is whoever's fucking you fucking you right?" he asked.

"I'm not seeing anybody," I hugged him. Art said, "Enjoy your spaghetti."

I went right out to the manager, Vince, who asked, “What happened?”

“I think I can come back,” I replied.

Vince told me to call Monday and O’Neill kept offering me his chair. But I didn’t want to sit down, I wanted to leave. Vince said, “By the way, did you ever see Hunter’s note?” Hanging down over the window were six sheets of yellow lined paper all taped together, penned in a large defiant scrawl by Hunter Thompson. I tried to lean over Vince to read it.

The first part deplored the evils of the business and then over and over he was asking whatever happened to his friend Simone, the spirit of the O’Farrell, the most creative girl act, what evil bastard was responsible for this hatchet job on his good friend Simone. All this really heartwarming stuff.

Vince said, “You know, there’re probably five or six versions of that story, one of them’s over there, I’m saving that for the archives.”

“I never told anyone my story,” I said. “But I don’t care, if I can come back.”

And as I turned and walked away I heard O’Neill say softly, “And now we have a gorilla.”

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“If I hadn’t learned to write about sex, and particularly to write about my own sexual desires, I don’t think I would have survived. I think the guilt, the terror I grew up with was so extraordinarily powerful that if I had not written my way out of it, I’d be dead … And I think it’s vital [to write about], aside from whether it ever becomes good fiction, particularly for women with transgressive sexuality … [or] people who in any way feel their sexuality cannot be expressed. Writing can be a way to find a way to be real and sane in the world, even if it feels a little crazy while you’re doing it. If we are to answer that call, we have to be able to feel every part of our lives.”

- *Dorothy Allison*

seeley quest

Bio

seeley quest was born in 1976, won a first poetry award in 1989, has lived in California and the East Bay since 1998, and performed around the Bay Area since 2001. Sie has featured at the International Queerness and Disability Conference, National Queer Arts Festival, SF Anarchist Cafe, SF Sex Worker Film and Arts Festival, and more, as well as on tour to Vancouver, Toronto, and numerous other US cities and colleges. More of hir work's at sinsinvalid.org.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? i had written a few shorter love poems in the late '90's which had hints of suggestive phrases, as i became interested in playing a bit with readers around what i was evoking. An affair in '98 with my second lover helped increase comfort with my sexuality at that time, which had been quite repressed while growing up, and pretty unsatisfied until my 20's. In '99 i also began reading the *East Bay Express*, where Carol Queen then published a sex advice column weekly (far better than Dan Savage's or anyone else's i've seen), and in '00 i met her going to an educational workshop at Good Vibrations she was teaching … … this was part of my first exposure to actually sex-positive public communication, and a local culture of discourse valuing directly engaging with sexuality. i went back to school in 2000 to finish a BA in Performance Studies and Gender Studies, and wrote my first erotically- invested vignette in late 2000,which was about power play, shaving someone's face. That fall

i was in a class for Gender Studies at New College of California taught by Judy Grahn called “Literature of the Sexual Underground,” and texts i recall included some of her writing, and also Robert Gluck’s. His book *Margery Kempe* narrated merging his experience with a female saint’s, and he and Judy explicitly describe and reflect on their sexualities. The opportunity to talk with both of them about their writing approaches—as well as see performance art then such as at 848 Divisadero, Keith Hennessy improvising pissing while dancing—influenced my own experimenting and interest to write material specifically invoking erotic energy.

he has short arms

seeley quest

you know, the kind you get if your parent was exposed to certain drugs
or other factors that mutate development.
He has short arms, but regularly wields his razor to keep a close shave,
because it seems easier to introduce himself with a European kiss on the cheek
than handshake.
I can tell he likes his jawline to stay as kempt and smooth as possible, ‘cause
he’s got a lot of people to meet and kiss and charm.
He’s also game to charm by feeding people chocolate, being fed chocolate, and by
licking chocolate off of others, too.
He shares this after a girl says I just fed her from my piece of chocolate torte.
He adds yes, he wants some also, and then I get his mouth
deliberately closed around my two fingers to caress the bite from them
with his tongue, an approach I hardly get every day.
He thanks me and moves off in the crowd, while I marvel at how supple his lips feel.

He has short arms, and perhaps his legs wouldn’t seem so long otherwise,
but with his height and peculiar grace there’s a beautiful long movement as he
suddenly steps *down* next to me upon returning and saying yes, he’d like more
but thinks he needs to be kneeling for it.
I can tell he’s not *all* about chiseled bravado when this time he lets me play with
him at my pace, lets me fingers brush against the surprising softness of the skin
around the lower edges of his face, asking, “how badly do you want it?”
before fingers pushing the smear past his teeth.
He worships the texture of my fingertips as much as the torte, savors sucking them

even more thoroughly now, and after he rises and disappears again,
I wonder if he likes his fingers licked as much as I do;
are his upper appendages sensitive different from his lower ones?

They *are* placed perfectly to stroke his own chest or another's; he barely has to
stretch one arm to mouth his fingertip wet and then circle that pleasure upon his nipple.
Economy of size yields economy of movement–I *like* the languidness of his hands
reaching above his shoulders, and returning to tickle at rib level,
where they belong.
He has short arms, which fingers just right, when I imagine him folding at the
waist and knees to place his head at my legs' juncture.
I can tell how sweetly his hands frame his face, how suited they are to press apart
thighs, how neither of us would be distracted by an excess of gangly limbs
from the focus of his elbows angled precisely in to pull hidden skin taut for discovery.
He has short arms, so he's trained his full lips to do some things in their stead,
like grasp the cap of a thing that needs a screwing motion to open it up;
he need apply no wrist when he can just circle it with his mouth's hold until it
comes completely undone.
He is also accomplished with his feet; he uses one to wash his ass.
Upon learning this, first I think, "What *else* can he do with his feet??"
Next I think, "What *else* does he do with his ass??"

I think of when he fingers knelt to me, how I said, "You *know* I'm also a pro-dom,"
and how instead of, "Why am I not surprised," what if he said, "You think I'm
surprised?" And then I could've shown restraint by simply saying,
"Cheeky,"

while lightly scratching my nails across the side of his face before letting him
suck them inside.

I can tell if I managed to draw him off from the crowd to dally somewhere less
public, when he leaned by a wall I could pin his arms at the shoulders to
hold him there; though he quite outsizes me what if he accepted it,
my pressing in to have my way where I want?

He has short arms, which remind me of my one high schoolmate with
not much dangling for his, the one who was my English teacher's son and
therefore felt off but who was beautiful and the most streamlined
runner on the track team, someone I saw cutting through air for hours.
Queer lovers of mine with straight spines have said they love my back's
asymmetry, its sinuous twisting, and I can tell he *knows* how it feels
to be a freak in one's bones, the way others don't.
So little is off-limits now; I hardly want to wash my fingers that held his chocolate,
knowing that later I'll roam more of my body with them.
I can tell he knows it, too, as upon parting for the night, hugging me close
with short arms, his last murmured words are, "When you get off think of me."

serpent stirred

seeley quest

You brought the *snarl* out of me, *beyond* the curling lip and teeth wanting to snap,
beyond the growl rumbling from my throat echoing the ones you left in my ear.
You brought out my hungriness for as *much* as you could give–
incisors clasping upon collarbone, smacked, grabbed, held in place, made to toss this way and that, gang-banged–you awoke how insatiable I could be.

Even to share meals and feeling the pleasure of feeding you, then to
find on my finger the spoor your body made later–to touch what entered and
exited and
stain myself with your smell lingering after I washed–it fueled me,
the earthiness of you.

This mouth opened as I pedaled on adrenaline across town; I sang big with yipee-*yiy*-yo-cai-yays, wanted to shriek and groan *so* much when with you that it ripped my voice to shreds–I was inspired to let myself *bellow* in my most shameless beastliness;
just wanted to hear you get on your pillow or bike and bellow, too.

'Cause I saw we're *those* kinds of cancers, guarded if need be but ready to give up some amazing goods once that surface's penetrated. I have *that* kind of moon
in scorpio, all about sex and death and delving into such states of extremity, learning from life at the edge. You know what they *say* about cancers,
how we're just scorpios with housecoats on, just a little more into domestic discipline. And you knew I was born in the year of the dragon, able to go all subterranean and deep and dark, then sky-high style, and back again.

These arms *burned*, still I rode, these haunches held over to grind into you *burned*, still I rode, days later it made accomplishing much anything

agonizingly slow, *still* I rode; that desire, to write while at work and call you to
read while you were working, too, and to steal off with toys to *fuck* myself until I
could take a break from that wave of pure lust and eat and give in to my fatigue–
that sneaking to jack off I almost *never* do, that dreaming your bowie against my
body I'd never done before; I rode into and through more burn
and still didn't know when my craving would abate.

Scorpion paused, flexed along its segments down to its tail, feeling the stinger
staying in balance no matt what shifted while covering the ground, ready to
strike if sufficiently aroused. Crab sidled up to another crab, admired
its strong shell, kept pincers prepared to defend kin's delicious soft parts from
attack danced on agile legs.
Kundalini serpent stirred from where it had lain in dormant waiting,
and started to rise up this crooked spine.

After you left, something at my groin gave way;
my age or my sounds and furies or how I keep pushing through
finally fissured tissue in a *new* way that needed correcting,
and before I knew what was happening, I couldn't call you from the hospital.

Then it was day after day in bed, recalling my desire against the washing machine,
on the kitchen counter, in bathrooms residential or public.
Week after week of wondering when I'll be able to take
the new scar at the bottom of my belly being pressed,
when where you once bit so sensationally at the top of my thigh won't be numb.

After you left, a day came that pulled me to find what I could take,
what I could off with all the ache and endurance in me.

f t f t, I found the power of holding *myself* in place,
teasing myself up, while holding stillness and openness,
not tensing my gut or clenching as if for your cock–
keeping from bucking as I came made me yell *louder*:
feeling inside rushing up, bigger and bigger, and I rode it
without getting burned at all.

After you left, I got my own knife–I don't need to imagine yours anymore;
this serpent knows what dreams are for deferring and when the time's come
to rise and ride.

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“we made love. How pedestrian the words look—trite, worn, practically featureless with use—but how can one better describe that which happens when it happens? that creation? that magic blending? I might say we became figures in a mesmerized dance before the rocking talisman of the moon, starting slow, so slow … a pair of feathers drifting through clear liquid substance of sky … gradually accelerating, faster and faster and finally into photon existence of pure light … as my whole straining body burst like fluid electricity into hers.”

- *Ken Kesey*
(from Sometimes a Great Notion*)*

Elizabeth Rae

Bio

Elizabeth Rae is a professional vixen. She just lost a five year game of Battleship that she was playing through the mail. It is her greatest defeat to date.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I have always been a writer. Writing about sex just seemed the next logical step. The biggest challenge for me is finding a different voice that sounds genuine. In non-erotic writing, I draw less on personal experience and am able to vary voices more frequently.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? It is helpful to know what parts of your story are actually erotic. You may be focused on one act, or even one word as the turning point to your piece. But when you expose it to the Erotic Reading Circle, you find that there is something very different that others found to be the hottest part of your story. Knowing where your other strengths lie enable you to turn a story a very different way.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns about publishing erotic work? I do not write under my own name. My "real" job is in a professional world where it might not harm my career, but it certainly wouldn't advance my career to have it known I write erotica. It isn't a secret to my friends, and I would love to be more open about it in my professional arena, but at the moment, it isn't advisable.

What's the inside scoop on your story? What inspired it? Any caveats or unusual tidbits you'd like to share with your readers? The story is true. Except that I never got the treadmill up to 7. And the focus of the story***?*** We're still good friends …

Stock Check

Elizabeth Rae

She just needed to sweat. It had been a week since the flirtation had started and she was wound tighter than a spring. Her skin felt too tight and too hot. Sometimes she would roll down the windows in her car, turn up Stevie Nicks singing "Edge of Seventeen," and drive across the bridge, belting at the top of her lungs. The sting of the cold bay air would hit her constantly warm skin and her body would sing. She could imagine it was him touching her. The kiss of the wind was his lips on her neck, on her face, in her hair.

She just needed to sweat. Yoga pants, men's t-shirt, iPod. She turned the treadmill to 4. Searching for something loud and fast with good bass, she scrolled through her playlists, feeling her shoes hit the rubber with a comforting thud. She settled on Ke$ha and turned the volume up. Jogging felt free. She knew she was in deep lust and he was eating it up. When she would look at him with that hunger, he just smiled, knowing exactly what he was doing to her.

It didn't help that the flirtation was at work. A constant professional, she reveled in finding excuses to run to the basement for various items. She had become an expert at restocking the floor. She had also developed perfect timing for her double entendres as she walked past him to retrieve an item.

Today had gone as it usually did. 4:30. There were only two more hours at work and her feet knew it. No matter the number of Dr. Scholl's inserts she tried or Dansko arch support shoes, at 4:30 her feet needed a rest. In the cutthroat word of upscale, commission retail, one tried to take as few breaks as possible so that when Danielle Steele or Leon Panetta came in, you were the one to snag them. But even as she saw a woman walk in with a fur jacket and a rock the size of Montana on her finger, she pressed the down button on the elevator. No sale was worth putting her feet through another minute.

As the lift arrived, she stepped in and pressed "B." What had she seen that needed filling? Usually she would go for something in fragrance. Even if it didn't need filled in, she could put it in backstock, making it the perfect cover. Fragrance also took her all the way across the stock room, in case he wasn't at the desk where he typically stood. Fortunately, she didn't have to look this time. The doors opened and she saw his blonde hair over the

shelves. He was wearing her favorite shirt, too; grey, just tight enough to show off the muscles in his arms, with the word “Lust” written in an engraver’s font on his chest.

She had started dressing for him in the mornings. On days she knew he was going to be there, she made sure she had a little more cleavage, a little shorter skirt, brighter red lipstick, a touch more perfume. It was only recently that he had started to reciprocate her flirtations, which made her more focused on letting him know that she wanted him. His head turned towards her slightly as she walked across the room. He smiled and went back to his task. He knew she did this on purpose and she suspected that he was flattered. Sometimes he would ignore her just to increase the tension for her next trip down. She grabbed a lemon verbena candle and as she turned to go back to the elevator he walked past her and brushed her hand with his. She felt a jolt rush through her and stumbled back to the lift.

Work made it more dangerous. Work made the tension more delicious, and made even the most mundane comment a terribly important conversation. Work made this touch third base.

As she rode the elevator back to the first floor, she felt herself blushing and tried to control herself. The last thing she needed was the rumor mill starting up about her personal life.

The music pumped in her ears as she thought back to that touch. She pushed 5 on the treadmill and started to run. She just needed to sweat. She wanted it to be with him. Rolling around in bed, heavy breathing, fast movements, exhaustion, shower.

He had cornered her in the towel aisle yesterday under the guise of helping her find what she needed. As she bent over to get a turtle-embroidered towel from the bottom shelf, he stood behind her. There was never anything outright filthy said. She felt his eyes on her ass in her black pencil skirt, which she had bought with him in mind, and lingered for a moment after she found what she needed. He hadn’t moved when she turned around. He just stood there staring at her. She smiled as she felt her eyes darkening with a hungry look.

He backed away from her, letting her take her towel and leave. It had been like this for a week! She pushed 7 on the treadmill and felt her heart race. Sweat started to pool at the base of her neck and the small of her back. Her hair clung to her face around her temples.

He would text her for hours in the evening, keying her up all over again. She found sleep impossible. She had tried masturbating but found that even though she got off, it wasn't satisfying. At least not satisfying enough to turn her brain off and get to sleep. She had even resorted to calling her phone fuck buddy who managed to give her one night of repose. But it wasn't what she wanted.

Exhausted, she turned the treadmill off. She was drenched, but she felt amazing. Expending even the tiniest bit of this energy he was pumping into her settled her. She walked to the bathroom and turned the shower to its hottest setting. She peeled off her workout garb, tossing it to the floor, and stepped into the steam. For a moment she simply stood in the hot water. Her skin turned pink and she exhaled slowly.

It hadn't been enough. She put her face in the shower's stream and her mind drifted to his hands. She saw them pulling aside the shower curtain and stepping in behind her. She felt the heat of his body coming close to hers. She felt the weight of his hands on her shoulders, rubbing down her chest and settling on her breasts. She felt his lips kiss the sweat off her neck. She felt his stiff cock pressing into her ass and her nipples perked. She put her hands in front of her on the shower wall, bracing herself as she bent over slightly; she wanted him inside her. Finally beyond the walls of work, he took charge and pulled her hips back onto him hard. His cock popped inside her, a sudden rush of relief and heat washing over her. Finally. She started to move back and forth on him, the water rushing between them on every thrust. She bent over further, aiming his cock at her g-spot and pushing back against him hard. He gripped her hips, moving faster against her, the sound of wet skin slapping in the air. Water ran in her eyes, her mouth, her ears. She felt her cunt tighten around him, the orgasms coming in waves. His hands dug into her flesh, pulling her back harder each time. A moan escaped her lips as she shook with another rush of blood to her extremities. She felt him cum inside her, holding her tight to him. They breathed in unison, both trying to catch their breath.

As she turned the shower off and pulled the curtain back, she knew she would be able to sleep tonight. She wrapped a towel around herself, and collapsed into bed, alone. She had just needed to sweat.

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“Write the story that you were always afraid to tell. I swear to you that there is magic in it, and if you show yourself naked for me, I’ll be naked for you. It will be our covenant.”

- *Dorothy Allison*

Jack Fritscher

Bio

Dr. Jack Fritscher, founding San Francisco editor- in-chief of *Drummer* and pioneer SOMA leather historian, has authored 100s of stories and 20 books: *Leather Blues* (1969); Lammy Finalist, *Some Dance to Remember*: *A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*; his memoir of his lover, *Mapplethorpe*: *Assault with a Deadly Camera*; and his *Gay San Francisco*: *Eyewitness Drummer*, *The Sex*, *Art*, *and Salon of Drummer Magazine*, winner "Best Book," National Leather Association (2008). He has received two "Lifetime Achievement" Awards from the Erotic Authors Assoc. (2007) and Pantheon of Leather (2014). JackFritscher.com

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? In 1953, when I was 14, I began writing about locker room and gladiator "stuff" that turned me on and made me hard while I was writing it. I wrote to the same literary standards I was learning for penning my non-erotic fiction and features in high school. Erotica differs in that one of its physical purposes as art is to make the reader cum. When I was editor of *Drummer*, I accepted and rejected writers on that masturbatory basis, and the subscribers called out for more. Erotica is CPR for non-erotic writing. Erotica is as essential to the heart of GLBT culture as Rap is to the soul of Black culture.

Do you write under your own name? When I sold my first poems, stories, and articles to magazines in 1957, I used a pen name because I was a Beatnik and thought it was cool and didn't realize the implications. By

1965, I wised up and exited “out” of that “scribbler’s closet.” Why credit an imaginary person for my writing***?***

What’s the inside scoop on your story? When I first arrived South of Market in 1961, I rented a room at the Bay Bridge Motel which still stands across the street from the old Ambush bar. As an eyewitness writer during all the years of my 1001 nights in SOMA, I fell in love with the masculine soul of the neighborhood, and its roots in all the gay men from the Gold Rush onwards through World War II who lived in the SRO cheap hotels where so many died in the urban disaster of the 1906 Earthquake. One of those SOMA pioneers spoke to me. I channeled his voice directly from the past in my epistolary story, “Love Among the Ruins.”

San Francisco Earthquake 1906: Love Among the Ruins

Jack Fritscher

San Francisco, April 25, 1906

Dear Benny,

It's yer old (ha ha) pal Jimmy writin you from General Delivery in Frisco where you might of heard back in Saint Louie we had a little earthquake on my birthday Wednesday last, April 18. What a way to turn 19 (ha ha). No cake for me like two years ago at our fine spree at the Saint Louie World's Fair before I lit out for Frisco on the train from Union Station. I ain't forgot that cake or the icin on it. How we had our cake & ate it too. Sorry I ain't writ you much but I bin thinkin about you, &, pal o mine, I wish you were here, but I'm glad you ain't been through what I been through. What I seen in the last seven days could break a man's heart. This whole city it ain't gone, but sorely wounded. Ma Sloat's boardin house where I live is all charcoal ashes down South of the Slot, along with all the South of Market buildins around it. So forget that address.

It were all us workin men livin in cheap rooms down there, & pore families, cuz nice San Franciscans never cross South of the Slot in Market Street. Remember I toll you last letter how the iron cable-car slot worked, runnin down the center of Market Street, pullin the streetcars from the Ferry Buildin west toward Twin Peaks like a hummin metal line fencin off us & the rich folk we work for. It were terrible after the shakin woke us all up at 5:12 in the A. M., yellin in our longjohns, steppin out as I did from my third-floor window that crumpled down like a house of cards to the curb, crushin fellas livin under me, all us who could dashin out into the cold streets, everyone screamin. The *Chronicle* says 60,000 us souls live down South of Market, & we was all runnin for it, tryin to get away from the fire that started in a Chinese laundry near Ma Sloat's at Third & Brannan. It just spread & spread through all the broken wood & gas mains shootin flames into the air. At 8:14 A. M. come another quake rollin through, knockin more buildins down like tinder, & puttin folks chokin on all the smoke in a worse panic.

I don't want to make you sick, dear Benny, but there was women and children, whole families killed, and lots of men, more than you can guess. Lots of fellas, some of em I knew, trapped in the collapse of all the bachelor workmen's boardin houses. They saw the path of the fire and they was beggin, shoutin, you could hear, in all kinds of languages, at first for somebody to pull em out, till those that didn't have guns to kill themselves, becuz they was about to be burned to death, was beggin somebody, anybody to shoot em, & they was shot. Some of em as a mercy was shot by each other, you could see em, some dyin naked as they was born, & even if you turned away, you could hear the shots that stopped the shouts. I didn't need the priest from Saint Pat's, which toppled down, kneelin in the holy bricks prayin in the middle of Mission Street, to tell me it was a vision of hell, & I was glad he got up like a man & started pullin trapped souls out from the rubble. Nothin none of us could do to keep somethin like 3000 souls alive in our disaster. Somethin like 500 looters, & still countin, was shot on site includin 2 fellas I knew who was just tryin to get their trousers & shoes & pocket watches & tintypes out of the wreckage. Gunfire & flames & smoke & explosions & the ground quiverin every few minutes like the earth was a bag of gravel. I left Ma Sloat's hightailin it with nothin.

Don't know where I'm gonna live. Am now sleepin rough, in a view with no room, you might say, as I'm campin on leaves of grass in a make-shift lean-to against one a the thousands of tents in Golden Gate Park which you may recall I once toll you you'd like since I could see us walkin there, hand in hand through Paradise.

You mayhaps have already read in the Saint Louie *Post-Dispatch* how when our Opera House fell down around his eyetalian ears, the Great Caruso sat on the ground in Union Square & cried, with less courage than Pagliacci's "Vesti la Giubba," that he was never comin back to Frisco. The tent my lean-to's presently up against in the Park sports a "hoochie-koochie" sign from downtown readin "Maiden Lane" (ha ha), & the friendly "tootsie-wootsies" inside it, who I do-for, cuz (among their services to other fellas) they cook for me, have been laughing at Caruso as not bein all that great! They hear tell that the grand soprano Luisa Tetrazzini herself, who don't scare easy like her warblin tenor chum Caruso, is sometime soon headin back into Frisco to sing free at Lotta Crabtree's fountain which is about the only thing still standin downtown at Market & Geary. The ladies, who know a town pump when they see one, been cookin what they been

jokin is “Chicken Tetrazzini” in her honor. I toll em it should be “Chicken Caruso,” & they all laughed, & give me pie. So life ain’t all bad, or bad at all, & it’s startin over, life is, which is the secret of Frisco.

I was wondrin if you wanted to come out here to the ruins (ha ha, but I mean it) cuz you said you were needin work & there’s lots of it here now, even more than before, for thousands of us strong young fellas.

Which vision reminds me I been takin my salt-water sea-bathing, between 7 A.M to 6 P.M., once-a-week out near the ocean, at cold North Pacific temperatures & up to eighty degrees, for twenty-five cents at the Sutro Bath that’s all glass and iron as fine as any building at the Saint Louie Exposition. Reason enough for you to travel west, there’s bathing music performed by the Sutro Baths Band, & I bet we could work for room & board for that ol blonde Ma Sloat nobody calls “Ma Slut” to her face. She’s rebuildin over on Folsom Street upstairs over where her brother Hallam has a piece of property for a new saloon cuz he believes in the future of Frisco even South of the Slot. She says he believes in the future of thirst, & he be namin the little street next his after their father the older Hallam who ain’t unlike yer pa & mine when it comes to bellyin up to a bar to bend an elbow.

If you have work there in Saint Louie then maybe you could send yer old secret chum a couple bucks to help out, but, dear Benny, if I have to start over, & I do have prospects, I’d a damn sight rather start over with you by my side here in Frisco cuz you never know what’s gonna happen next, but this monkey’s uncle, yours so truly, can tell it’s gonna happen here, & it could be good for us. Remember when you was seein me off at the train station, steamin away, you cracked wise that confirmed bachelors gotta know how to take care of ourselves.

I can’t meet you in Saint Louie, Louie, where we fell down laughin tryin to dance the hoochie-coochie, but I can meet you at the Golden Gate. Don’t be late! You might want to hear the Great Tetrazzini as much as me (ha ha) except this boy ain’t no more singing soprano. That married bachelor Horace Greeley was right when he said, Go West, young man, go West! There’s gold in them thar hills! I found, down near the Embarcadero, blowin around on Folsom Street, some French postcards like you never seen. It’s an ill wind that blows no good instructions.

I love this place, but not as much as you know who. There. I finally said what you said when last we parted. Put that in yer pipe, dear Benny, & smoke it. Two bucks would be fine. Yer hand in mine, pal o mine, would be

better. If I had a ceilin, I'd be lyin awake at nights starin at it & thinkin of you, takin it all in hand, your hand in mine, hand in glove with you.

Yer devoted pal,
Jimmy

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“The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves.”

- *Audre Lorde*
(*from* “*Uses of the Erotic*: *The Erotic as Power*”)

Amy Butcher

Bio

Amy Butcher is a silver fox "liminal guide" and enjoys taking people through transformations. She has been many things, including a tour guide on bike trips through France, a ROPES course instructor, a massage therapist, and book designer. She is the author of the award-winning murder mystery *Paws for Consideration* and co-editor of *Sex Still Spoken Here*. Follow her adventures at amybutcher.com.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? While I didn't write erotica in college, I had a freshman English teacher (Prof. Sussman, if I remember) who instilled a passionate relationship to the semi-colon. My first attempt at erotica was an effort to capture (and process) the hyper-sexy experience of leading bike tours in France.

Do you write in multiple genres and, if so, why? Writing erotic short fiction gave me the confidence to move into the longer form of writing murder mysteries. I mean, if you can write the sex (and not just 'fade to black') then the rest is gravy.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? OMG. So important! One of my biggest lessons has been the somatic experience of reading erotic words aloud in community. Often, when I've really gotten to something that is real and deep, I will literally shake after I read. I love

having that experience and learning to not just be OK with it but actually welcome the release.

What's the inside scoop on your story? My stories are usually inspired by some tiny moment that then expands into a longer story, the substance of which emerges from some dark mysterious corner of my imagination. In this case, it was hearing and being curious about the loud sound of a person walking in stilettos. Couple that with the Castro Theatre, some Thorlo socks, and … still hoping to do a 'walk through' to see if I got all the parts right. :)

Stilettos

Amy Butcher

Sturdy. That was the word that came to mind as Kathy regarded her tubular reflection in the full-length mirror. Short, no-nonsense haircut. Broad shoulders. Barrel-shaped torso tapering down to nonexistent hips. Breasts clearly overshadowed by the belly below. *Aren't breasts supposed to stick out further than a belly*? she wondered, as she twisted sideway in front of the mirror. Her baggy shorts hung long and loose, like curtains above the thick ankles flowing squarely into Thorlos and low-cut hikers. Sensible shoes, because Kathy—like a good boy scout—was always prepared.

Kathy liked the streamlined sturdiness of her body. Mr. Bitters, her calico, stretched on the bed and yawned, offering his own opinion. "Well, it's not like I'm going out on a date. I'm just off to meet Lisa at the movies." At that he curled into a ball, turning his furry back on her, and she headed out into the night.

Kathy had just reached the ticket booth at the Castro Theater when her cell phone rang. "Hey Kathy, it's Lisa. I'm so sorry but I'm not going to be able to make it tonight. Sara is in a bad mood, and we're out of food. We haven't been to Rainbow in a week, and …"

Kathy held the phone away from her ear. She watched the bustling evening crowd pass by while the tiny voice droned on. Eventually, she lifted the phone back to her mouth and broke in. "Hey, Lisa, I'm already at the theater so I'm just gonna go in. Call me later." Click. She flipped the phone shut without waiting for a response. Dykes can be so flakey sometimes, she sighed, but she was just as happy to have a quiet night at the movies alone.

As she headed into the darkened, half-filled theater, her rubber soles squeaked slightly on the bare concrete floor. She settled into a middle seat and waited for the show to begin.

Crack. Crack. Crack. The sound of high heels striking concrete echoed through the theater like rifle shots.

Crack. Crack. Each aggressive stride rattled the earth beneath her. She really hated that type of shoe, she griped to herself, on political as much as aesthetic grounds. She knew how it would be: some straight woman, her delicate ankles perched precariously on ridiculously narrow stiletto heels, the effort to stay upright requiring an acrobatic stance: hips thrust back,

back arched forward, and breasts cantilevered out for counterbalance. Why do women hobble themselves like that, she lamented, just to appear attractive by someone else's fashion standard … what a waste!

Crack. Crack. Then the sound of smooth leather sliding across concrete … in Kathy's row!

Long and leggy, Stiletto-babe was wearing a brown tweed mini- skirt, a white button down shirt, and a yellow-brown scarf tightly knotted at the base of her neck. She too was juggling popcorn and a soft drink, though less successfully than Kathy had, what with the added challenge of the vintage handbag swinging heavily from her arm. She spilled popcorn like little trail markers as she sidestepped gingerly down the row, collapsing finally with a sigh into the seat beside Kathy.

Geez, Kathy thought, she would have to sit right there! She turned and cast a judgmental stare. The woman, all blue eye shadow and brown bangs, smiled back, oblivious to Kathy's intent.

Throughout the movie Stiletto-babe made Kathy miserable. She hogged the armrest. She crossed her legs, kicking the sharp toe of the stilettos into Kathy's shin. She even managed, while laughing, to spew popcorn kernels into Kathy's lap like some poorly aimed aerial assault.

With each intrusion, Kathy grew more and more annoyed. She turned and glared but to no avail, as Stiletto-babe seemed oblivious. At one point, Kathy leaned over and growled, "Could you please!" But Stiletto-babe just leaned toward her and cooed, "Please what?"

God, Kathy thought, these straight women are so clueless! She sat there growing more and more annoyed.

When the credits finally began to roll, Kathy rose quickly. Casting one more frustrated glance at Stiletto-babe, she pushed out past the others seated in her row. Desperate for air, she made a beeline for the side exit. Slamming the door behind her, she strode up the roughly paved alley, past the recycling bins, and headed for the gate.

"Shit!" she said, as she discovered the gate was locked.

Just then, behind her, she heard the side exit door swing open and that terrible noise … crack, crack … filled the space.

Kathy's shoulders hunched in dread as she turned slowly to face her nemesis. At the far end of the alley stood Stiletto-babe. Hands on hips, pocketbook rocking gently from her arm, wobbling just slightly on those narrow heels. "Oops, looks like we're stuck," she said laconically.

“Unbelievable!” Kathy snorted and pounded back down the alley, practically knocking Stiletto-babe over as she pushed past her. She pulled frantically at the exit door but it wouldn’t budge. When she felt Stiletto-babe bump her from behind, she could no longer contain her frustration. “Good grief!” She shouted as she turned. “Do you have no spatial awareness?”

But Stiletto-babe just stood there, calm as could be. “Did you like the movie?” she asked. Digging around her purse she pulled out a pack of Wrigley’s, tapped out two sticks like cigarettes, and extended her slender arm slowly towards Kathy. “Want some?”

When Kathy shook her head “no,” Stiletto-babe just pursed her lips and shrugged. “Suit yourself,” and dropped the gum back into the cavernous purse, snapping it shut.

“Whadya’ think of that hot sex scene in the movie?” Stiletto-babe asked. “The one in the alley … hmmm … sorta like this one.”

Kathy stared in stunned silence.

“The guy was pretty gross but I have to admit, there’s nothing hotter than a good, sturdy body. I like to have something to hold onto when I let go. …” As Stiletto-babe talked, her voice gently modulated, swaying through a tonal range that soothed Kathy’s frustration. Stiletto- babe spoke slowly, curiously, as if this was the most normal of situations.

Kathy shook her head, trying to come to her senses. What on earth were they talking about? She couldn’t tell if Stiletto-babe was flirting with her or mocking her, but she suspected the later. Kathy was handy. She could open doors and fix things like any good butch. She showed her love to her girlfriends by installing new wiper blades on their cars. She brought straightforward competence, not passion, to her lovemaking. So she had no illusions that she might be either ‘attractive’ or ‘a catch.’

“I like to act on impulse and I’m nothing if not impatient,” Stiletto-babe said with more urgency, wobbling slightly as she took a step forward. In those heels she was at least six inches taller than Kathy, and that step had brought her breasts right to Kathy’s eye level. An edge of dark lace peeked out from behind the second button, which she had undone as she approached.

Stiletto-babe smiled and said, “I noticed you when I first sat down, before the movie had even started. I have an eye for sturdy butches. In fact, there’s nothing that I like better.” And as if to emphasize her point, she

suckled her fingertip and then nestled its moist tip into the notch at the center of Kathy's collarbone. "Tsss," she hummed into Kathy's ear.

Jeez, Louse! Kathy thought, she didn't just do that, did she? But her body had no doubt. The moist finger on her skin had been like grounding the last clamp of jumper cables and that sound in her ear the ignition. A surge of energy flowed straight down to her crotch, revving her clit to life.

Stiletto-babe was now so close that Kathy could feel her heat like a pulse, vibrating through the air. The sweet smell of her soft skin filled Kathy's nostrils, leaving her weak in the knees. It didn't help her concentration any that Stiletto-babe had drawn her index finger slowly down between Kathy's breasts, across the rise of her belly, and was tugging urgently at the waistband of her shorts.

Pulling gently, Stiletto-babe weighed the density and inertia of Kathy's flesh. She'd had the pretty bois, the ones who seemed perfect foils to her femme persona, but they were slender and predictable. It was always the same tight jeans, same studded black belt, the same Good Vibes Soft Pack tucked into their tighty whities. She'd been had by the stone butches who treated her like a valued but fragile prize. She'd even been with a femme or two but there was never enough space in the bathroom for the both of them. No, for whatever reason, Stiletto-babe had to admit that it was these sturdy, second-wave feminist butches that did it for her. They were simple and ardent and, most important, never rebelled when she took charge. That was their dirty little secret: they were such bottoms at heart! Leaning in she whispered gently into Kathy's ear, "Are you ready to eat me out?"

Did she actually purr after saying that? Kathy wondered. She tried to focus but her mind kept wandering off, too afraid to believe in what was happening. But she knew a butch-cue when she heard it!

Still grasping Kathy's shorts, Stiletto-babe maneuvered her back against the wall in the space between the two blue recycling bins.

"Can you kneel down?" she asked. She knew women like Kathy, years of softball behind them, could be arthritic and she didn't want to make any assumptions. Kathy dropped to her knees with barely a whimper.

From this lower vantage point, Kathy could see each taut calf muscle firing as Stiletto-babe worked to maintain her balance. OK, Kathy granted, maybe there was something athletic to simply standing in those things.

Stiletto-babe set her purse carefully atop the recycling bin and—reaching down with both hands—lifted the hem of her tweed mini- skirt just

a few inches but it was more than enough to reveal the neatly trimmed but decidedly wet fur of her pussy.

Kathy gasped in horror. This was, in point of fact, not her forte. Her skillset lay in her hands, not on the tip of her tongue. But the smell of stale popcorn mixed with the tangy sweet allure of Stiletto-babe's crotch in a way that Kathy couldn't have anticipated. Like her yeast-topped popcorn from before, she dove right in.

Mixing a healthy dose of her own saliva into this foreign wetlands, she explored with long strokes up one side and down the other. She nestled her chin in for good measure, just to spread the juices evenly over her face, and then returned to nibble delicately on the oyster-like nub of Stiletto-babe's clit. She licked flat like a steamroller over the whole of Stiletto-babe's pussy. She pointed her tongue into a probe, exploring each flap and fold. She grasped the thick outer lips between her teeth and flicked at the trapped hairs with her tongue, sucking the flesh deeply into her mouth. Gaining confidence, she hummed, happy in her work.

Stiletto-babe wanted to straddle her, sit right down on top of her busy mouth, but she knew that would make it hard for Kathy to breathe. Instead, she balanced carefully, clinging to the grimy wall in front of her for support. Her hips were rocking and she started to moan.

"Put your tongue inside me," Stiletto-babe commanded.

Kathy followed instructions well. She had already tasted the slight shift, the silvery tang that had started to leak from inside, and sensed that Stiletto-babe was close to coming. She plunged her tongue in as deep as it would go.

Stiletto-babe was thrusting deeply now, forcing herself down onto Kathy. She wanted to be filled, to be touched all over. Risking an almost certain fall, she took a hand from the wall and twisted hard at her nipples, each tug releasing a guttural wail.

Kathy licked and plunged with all her might. She could barely breathe as Stiletto-babe descended upon her, moving faster now, bucking with abandon.

Stiletto-babe was so close now. "Just like that … and don't stop!" She felt the bottom drop out of her uterus and she knew she could count down from there. Five, four, three, two, one … and she exploded, clenching her thighs tightly around Kathy's head, clinging precariously to the recycling bins for support.

Kathy could neither see nor hear, for she was buried deep in Stiletto-babe's crotch, but her other senses were strong. She could feel the wetness drip down over her chin and she could smell the strange mélange of cum and vintage tweed.

Stiletto-babe stepped back, smoothed her skirt down and tucked in her shirt. Reaching into her purse, she pulled out a compact and some keys, dusted a little powder onto her flushed cheeks and then dropped the compact back in the purse, clasping it shut with a loud snap. She slid its strap up to the crook of her elbow, where it swung quietly as she paused and looked down at Kathy, still on her knees. Sighing, Stiletto-babe took Kathy's chin in her hand and said, "Thanks cutie, that was swell!" She blew a kiss over her shoulder as she strode up the alley, the click of her heels echoing thunderously off the walls. With her key, she unlocked the gate (as she'd done so many times before) and stepped out onto the busy sidewalk. Tossing her head back, Stiletto-babe pivoted on one slender heel and strode off. Meanwhile, back in the alley, Kathy struggled to her feet, grinning as she listened to the newly pleasant sound of high heels fading into the distance.

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Dorothy Freed

Bio

Dorothy Freed was born in New York City and became a San Francisco transplant in late 1975. She is an artist turned writer, who earned her BFA at Syracuse University. She currently enjoys life in a coastal Bay Area community. Visit her website at DorothyFreedWrites.com.

Mini-Interview

Do you write in multiple genres and, if so, why? Yes, I write in multiple genres: memoir, fiction, and personal essays—and about all aspects of experience, from inspirational stories to ones about dogs. Several years ago I decided to tell all the stories inside me that want to be told, in the way they want to be told.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? The ERC is an invaluable part of my writing process. It differs from a "regular" writer's group in that I am reading my work to like-minded individuals, with no limits placed on the subject matter I present.

Do you write under your own name? The name, Dorothy Freed, is a pseudonym chosen to spare my sons and grandson any potential embarrassment involved in having the world- at-large know that their silver-haired, sixty-nine-year old mom and grandmom writes about the sexual side of life.

What's the inside scoop on your story? My story, *The Gambler*, is creative non-fiction, inspired by my an erotic involvement with a professional

gambler many years ago.

The Gambler

Dorothy Freed

I met Jerry, the gambler, on a sunny August afternoon at Bay Meadows Racetrack. I was standing near the finish line, breathing in the smell of sweaty horses, combined with cigarette smoke, beer, and plenty of dust, while checking out my fellow gamblers, who were mostly men. The day at the races had been planned with a friend from work, who'd canceled at the last minute. So I'd come alone. And why not?—it was 1977 in the San Francisco Bay Area—repression was out, freedom was in. I was thirty-three, single, and dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure, after ending a dull ten-year marriage.

In spite of my cheering, my horse came in dead last. "Damn!" I said, irritably, crumpling my losing ticket and tossing it in the trash.

And that's when I met him; the well-dressed, black hunk who'd been watching me for the last three races, taking in every detail of my long, wheat-colored hair, and pale, smooth skin. He caught my eye and smiled boldly—all the proof *I'd* ever need that black is beautiful. I was glad I'd worn heels that day, and the green velvet pants that showed my full, round ass to perfection.

"Have you picked some winners today?" I asked, starting up a conversation, and he pulled a fistful of tickets from his jacket pocket, in response, and said a little smugly, "I've been betting horses for a living for many years, baby. It's my business to win."

I looked him over carefully, from his polished leather boots to the tightly wound ringlets of his Afro, stopping along the way to check out the expensive wool slacks and sports jacket. His silky white shirt was open halfway down his chest, revealing curling black hair and smooth, brown skin. He had full lips and even, white teeth. And dimples; I'm a pushover for dimples. I told him I'd never met a professional gambler before and was sure he had interesting stories to tell. He suggested we discuss his profession over dinner—which sounded like a winner to me.

I bet along with Jerry after that and won money all afternoon. As we placed our bets, cheered our horses to the finish line, and collected our money, little electric shocks of excitement zapped back and forth between us, a promise of more to come. I gave him my phone number before leaving the track and drove home, happily speculating on what he'd be like in bed.

***

We met for dinner in San Francisco, at seven the next evening, at the Hyatt Regency across from the Ferry Building. Dinner was a heady combination of delicious food and mounting sexual tension that had my nipples standing at attention for the entire meal.

After dinner we retired to the spacious, lushly carpeted suite Jerry called his Bay Area home. While he poured Chardonnay at the bar near the refrigerator, and set the radio to an FM jazz station, I sat cross- legged on the plush, brown sofa facing the front window, looking out at the darkened sky and night lights of the city. I was thinking about how getting it on with a new lover is always a gamble—and hoping this one would pay off with some great sex and, maybe, a new friend.

Jerry joined me with two crystal glasses, and we sat, side by side, chatting, sipping the cold dry wine, while exchanging meaningful glances in anticipation of what was to come. He surprised me by inquiring whether he would be my first black lover. I told him he would not and asked why he wanted to know.

He said he was curious because some white chicks really dig black men —hadn't I heard the saying, "try black, you won't go back"?

I told him that sounded catchy, but it was the *other* rumor that intrigued me.

"You mean the one saying black men are hung like horses?" he asked, grinning.

"That's the one," I purred, staring with meaning at the sizable bulge in his slacks.

"Yeah, baby, I sure have heard that there rumor," Jerry said, nodding his head. And with a look promising I wouldn't be disappointed, he stood up, took my hand and led me to the spacious bedroom—and the giant, satin covered bed.

***

I stood near the bed, my heart racing. Currents of excitement coursed through me as Jerry removed my clothing, piece by piece, in a lazy strip tease. He smiled when I was naked, looking me over for a long, slow minute. Then he bent his head, kissed me deeply, his full lips pressing mine, his hot tongue exploring my open mouth. I responded eagerly. We kissed for a long time, my erect nipples rubbing deliciously against his chest, until

I felt my legs give way beneath me and dropped to my knees before him, staring up into his eyes. Reaching down he unzipped his fly and pulled out his cock.

Rumor or not, it *was* enormous, and hard as a brick. I reached for it eagerly. It was the color of rich, dark chocolate, and felt hot and silky smooth in my hands. I licked lightly at its head, breathing in his sharp, musky scent; lapping at the delicate droplets of precome seeping from its tiny, mouth-like opening. I ran my tongue up the shaft, and made the fluttering movements around the rim that I'd learned from experience made a man lose his mind. For a grand finale, I relaxed my throat with the ease born of practice, took the whole thing in, and just sucked. (Linda Lovelace, shove over).

I sucked him like my life depended on it, until he'd had enough and led me to the bed, laying me back against the pillows. I felt the mattress move slightly under his weight, when he sat down next to me, sliding a hand between my legs, and whispering, "Baby, you're *so hot*!"

Slipping two fingers inside me, he explored my dripping vagina—moving around the opening at first, caressing my swollen outer lips, tugging them gently, then parting my inner lips and delving deeper inside. The exquisite sensations made me moan with pleasure, and roll my hips around on the bed. When I was ready, more than ready, he bent and went down on me, pleasuring my clit with his knowing mouth and tongue. I moaned steadily, as he continued—licking, sucking, nipping lightly at my aroused pussy with his teeth. His fingers teased my tight little anus which opened and closed in response to his touch, like a tiny, hungry mouth.

"*There*, *exactly there*" I gasped, and, man among men, he stayed exactly there. My excitement mounted, overwhelming me until I came, hugely, crying out with pleasure.

Jerry entered me then, plunging in with abandon, holding my wrists over my head, making me feel I had no choice in the matter. He could tell I liked that by the way my hips rose up to meet him, and my inner muscles gripped him, squeezing down.

His cock felt enormous inside me, wonderfully, painfully hard. I wriggled beneath him, beside myself with delight, grinding my clit against the base of his cock. Raising my legs I wrapped them around him, hanging on for the ride as he pumped me fast and hard, His heavy balls slapped deliciously against my ass. Finally, panting with pleasure and mindless with

excitement, I exploded, moaning, into a thousand fragments of pleasured flesh—and lay flushed, breathing hard, and completely satisfied.

***

"I'll be here at the Hyatt for most of the summer," Jerry said. We were side by side on the plush brown sofa again, exchanging smiles. We chatted like old friends in the morning sunlight, devouring the eggs, toast, and hot, strong coffee delivered by room service. "Will I see you again, Dorothy?" he asked, and smiled, with that cocky, confident look a man gets when he knows he's satisfied his woman.

"You can bet on it," I said, turning to kiss him lightly—thinking, any man I can laugh with *and* come with is a big-time winner to me.

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“Erotic means ‘in relation.’ Erotic is what those deep relations are and can be that engage the whole body – our heart, our mind, our spirit, our flesh. It is that moment of being exquisitely present.”

- *Terry Tempest Williams*

Ember Eli

Bio

Ember Eli is a gender-fluid shape-shifter, whose passions include exploration and facilitation of ecstatic experiences; giving and receiving service; and building family networks with humans and other animals. She brings a queer leather sensibility to her teaching and writing, and finds sharing story to be a potent means of both unraveling and re-weaving. Ember is captivated by the eroticism of quiet control, and loves unleashing characters who find themselves changed by love, lust, dubious intentions and chance encounters.

Mini-Interview

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? There is tremendous power in being in a space with overt permission and invitation to share erotic writing. Such permission provides a counter- balance to lifelong cultural messages against such writing and speaking. The value of a "regular" (i.e. closed, time-limited) writing group with a focus on sex—such as Jen Cross' Declaring Our Erotic workshops—is that the format creates safety and spaciousness for exploration of writing about sex. For me, one value of the Erotic Reading Circle—which is drop-in and ongoing—has been that it allowed me a gentle step out of the cocoon of a closed writing group. Sharing my writing in that setting felt like a deeper level of risk, and experiencing my writing being positively received there felt empowering. Another value of the Erotic Reading Circle is exposure to erotic writing with a wide range of writing styles in various genres.

What's the inside scoop on your story? In my erotic writing, my characters are frequently confounded by an unexpected, intense attraction that calls them to some form of transformation. Sometimes I write from the point of view of someone struggling to reconcile an out-of character attraction; other times I write from the catalyst's point of view. I am fascinated by shifts from stasis to movement, and I enjoy exploring how the dynamic nature of sexual energy can propel people towards accelerated change.

Tone

Ember Eli

I notice everything about my prey, because in the details of who they are lies the secret to how to take them down.

She had bows on her pumps. Pert, perky bows. The light crimson was an exact match for the buttons on her blouse and the horizontal line on her off-white handbag. The color was picked up again in her lipstick, but not in her earrings. Those were simple, bone-white like her blouse. Her clothing was spotless. Even her shoes had no more than that morning's specks of dust. Everything about her, from the bows to her hair to the way she walked —and later, spoke—was crisp.

I insinuated myself into her presence by pretending I was lost. She gave efficient directions, allotting to me that portion of her attention that was required for the task. I could see that all the while, the wheels were still turning. No doubt she was thinking about her 5-year plan, or the small pile of mending waiting, carefully folded, on a closet shelf. I upped the ante and allowed a flash of naked need to pass across my eyes. "I have a disability," I told her. "It's like dyslexia, but with spatial relationships. It's almost impossible for me to find my way." She hesitated, and I watched her recalibrate her plan for her day. Her values won out, as I knew they would. She did what she should, and walked me all the way to my ostensible destination.

As we walked I gradually began to lengthen my stride to throw her off hers. At first she took two steps to every one of mine, maintaining the same tight movement as before, but then I distracted her by asking her how far we were from our destination. As she turned partially

toward me to answer, her steps lengthened into my rhythm and her hips began to sway slightly. A startled look flashed across her face, and I could see her brushing it away as if it were a fly.

I smiled ingratiatingly. "You must allow me to thank you for your trouble," I said. "I was told there is a lovely tea house right near my destination. Perhaps you know where it is?" My question allowed her to pretend that she remained in the helper role. "Yes," she replied. "I'll show you." When we arrived at the Casbah Tea House, I let my veil of helplessness fall away for a moment. I looked deeply into her eyes, saying, "I was told there are some priceless exotic blends in here. Not to be

missed.” I raised my eyebrow in a way that was more statement than question, and moved boldly to hold the door open for her. She hesitated before the door. “Not to be missed,” I repeated firmly. A slight glaze came into the edges of her eyes, and she walked through the ornate carved wood and bronze door of the Casbah. “I’ll have the black currant,” I told the counter girl, “and the lady will have …” “Chai, please. Decaf.” Laden with our tea on a small tray, I walked past the conventional tables and chairs and chose a low corner table surrounded by cushions.

She was clearly unnerved by the seating arrangement. She hesitated, and then slid those prim pumps off, placing them carefully between us so she could tuck her legs under and smooth her skirt down as far as possible. “Where are my manners?” I murmured smoothly. “The name is Tone.” “Tone?” she repeated faintly. She hesitated while a brief inner struggle ensued. I knew she had thought of asking if my name was short for Tony, or Antonia, perhaps. What stopped her was her first full- on awareness that she didn’t know if I was male or female. I pretended not to notice her discomfiture. “Olivia,” she said. “Livia,” I repeated, “charmed.” I picked up her hand and kissed the top momentarily before setting it carefully back down. A slight flush crept into her cheeks, then subsided as if by the force of her considerable will. But she let my presumptuous abbreviation of her name slide.

Livia sipped her chai, and I watched its spicy warmth affect her features. I had chosen the Casbah for its sensuality and those floor cushions. I stretched my legs out and “accidentally” grazed her knee. The merest hint of a shudder passed through her, and I watched her extinguish it instantly, as one might stifle an involuntary cry that they feared could lead to their detection—say, if they had seen someone approaching on a dark night and wished to pass back into the shadows unseen.

I knew it was time to act.

I looked directly into her eyes again. “I have a confession to make,” I said. She looked at me, and I read the shock in her eyes at my inappropriate words. But her body remained perfectly composed, and she gave me no prompt. “I wasn’t really lost,” I continued. “I wanted to meet you.”

I watched her lose it then. To a less discerning observer, she would still appear put-together. Her back remained erect, her breathing even. But I could read her small signs. She was stunned. The tiny evidence of her conflicted emotions could be read in her eyes, traced in the subtle flare of

her nostrils, the almost imperceptible movement of the small muscles under her cheekbones.

"I—" she began slowly. "I have lived my life in such a way that this sort of thing simply does not happen to me." I smiled then, because I knew I had her.

"Until now," I said simply. "Yes, until now," she agreed. I had unmade her identity in three sentences. "What do you want?" she asked. There was a pliability to her tone that I was sure had never been there before. Her voice cracked on the unfamiliar cadence. I took her hand again, and this time continued to hold it. "I want to watch you explode," I said. "I want to see you in the grip of something that, for once in your life, you can't control. I want to see you grieve the futility of your past, and hunger for things you put away with your first words."

She looked directly into my eyes then, and for the first time her eyes were completely unveiled. I watched her see me seeing her.

I knew if she had been standing, her knees would have buckled. That perfect posture would have slipped into something fluid and lost. As it was, she shifted. She raised herself up on her knees for a moment, then settled back down directly on top of her feet, placing the hand I wasn't holding palm-up on her knee. Unconsciously, she had assumed a posture of supplication. She waited attentively for whatever I would say or do next.

"Clear your calendar for the day," I commanded. I squeezed her hand gently, kissed her on the cheek, then rose. While getting her another chai and a peanut butter cookie, I watched her fumble with her cell phone and make several brief calls. I returned with the tray. "You will need to stay hydrated and fueled," I said. She took my offerings, and when she had finished, I rose wordlessly, again taking her by the hand. She followed pliantly, and I felt an arching pleasure at her transformation, which I knew was only the beginning.

This time I strolled at an easy pace, and the sway remained in her hips. Her eyes had softened at the edges yet a new intensity burned at their core. As we walked, she began more and more to inhabit her body. She did not ask where we were going.

As we drew closer to my lair, my mouth began to water. My shins and heels vibrated with the urge to pounce. My teeth ached, anticipating her newly pliant flesh.

I will not harm her. It is my gift to know how to tightrope a woman across her edges. I will let her fall … yes. I will let her fall again and again. Into the hidden nets that will keep her whole.

I will start with her outer trappings and work my way in. I will take her apart cell by cell until she is unrecognizable to herself. But I will know her.

The first thing I will do once we are inside is kneel before her. I will take out a knife. Hold it up so she can see its length and sharpness. She will stand perfectly still then. I will reach down slowly, and cut the bow off her shoe. Just one. I will pocket my trophy while she watches. Then I will undress her and roll on those perfectly-pressed clothes. My musk will infuse so deeply into their folds that she will never get it out. Should she ever want to.

I notice everything about my prey, because in the details of who they are lies the secret to how to take them down.

I do it for the joy of it. The joy of using everything I have—eyes, wits, teeth, fists—in service to her unmaking. Her reshaping. To see her reduced to her essence and thus made huge.

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“There’s no safety in writing well. There is no way to be naked, which is what you have to be to be a good writer … and still be safe … I think one of the things that’s happened in sexual writing is we’ve gotten the notion that nakedness is about being explicit about details and techniques. I find that really tedious. What is truly naked is emotional exposure. And for every writer that’s different. The place where you’re pushing yourself the most emotionally is going to be different. It’s way different … depending on your age and the world you were brought up in, depending on who you’re most afraid of …. Every person has a fear. And fear is your best friend.”

- *Dorothy Allison*
(*in E. Benedict’s* The Joy of Writing Sex)

Lilycat

Bio

Lilycat is a DJ for FCCFree Radio, where she forces people to tell her their life stories, and she also writes. She has stories in *Chemical Lust*, *Whipped*, *More 5 Minute Erotica*, *Surprise* and *Hos*, *Hookers*, *Call Girls*, *and Rent Boys* and another book ….She'd like to thank her biker daddy—Mr. O—for the inspiration.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? All the cool kids were doing it—so I did it, too. Erotica has sex in it.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? I tweet … People make me do it.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I get the best feedback from ERC and it encourages me to write. I get to hear great stories, too.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns about publishing erotic work? I write under a fake name because that was my Christmas gift to my mother … I'm cheap and she is hard to shop for.

What's the inside scoop on your story? What inspired it? Any caveats or unusual tidbits you'd like to share with your readers? Someone told me

there is nothing more beautiful than the sight of a woman giving you a blowjob …. That is all.

Just Another Dirty Bathroom Sex Love Story

Lilycat

I almost break out in hysterical laughter when she tells me she's giving up dope. How many times have people told me they were quitting, only to come back to me a few weeks later begging for just one more hit, just a little taste? But the sweet sadness in her brown eyes made me try to fake a belief that she was the one who would make it away.

"Well, since I won't be seeing you again, I guess we should settle up on the money you owe me," I say, as I try to stop a snicker from escaping.

I watch her pretty little mouth quickly trying to explain a payment plan idea or maybe I could just forget about the $100 … just this time … her last time … please? She continues on about how she is completely broke, and actually came to The Sinner's Den—a nightclub in West Hollywood—to borrow money from a friend for a bus ticket. She is trying to get to a small town outside of Palm Springs, where a waitress job and a room in her cousin's house waited for her. She goes on about a new location … a new life … a real chance to stay clean.

I run my hand through her hair to the back of her head, and explain how there was other ways to pay than in cash.

Seconds later she is kneeling on the scattered, used paper towels and wet toilet paper that decorate the Men's Room floor, her eyes a bit sad but resigned as she looks up at me. I unzip my pants.

I take my cock out of my pants and bring it toward her opening mouth; her hands, soft and warm, wrap around it. Her mouth is even warmer than her hands. She sucks my cock in whole, quite a feat for such a small mouth. There is something great about a woman with a little mouth that can take a lot of dick.

The urinal gives off a pungent smell that fills the Men's Room. The music and the loud talk in the club sounds like it is try to break through the locked door, but I am more focused on the subtle sounds that are coming out of her mouth. It sounds like a cross between a sigh and moan, which she makes as my cock glides in and out of her.

I nestle my hand in her hair, a dysfunctional design of various fading colors, a sign of the search for style and individuality imprinted on her head. I start to guide her head to and from the base of my cock to the tip.

I look down at the hot tableau of this woman in a skin-tight, low- cut dress sucking my dick. The dress, a regular of hers, used to be not be as tight; she's gained some weight, which has left nice curves on her once drug-wasted body. She obviously has been clean for a little while.

I notice her arms, which have track marks now fading and scaring up. She also has a tattoo of a heart with a poorly-done vine around it to cover up some guy's name … starting with an "M." I wonder if this mister "M" was the one who first tied her arm off and showed her where to put the needle in. I wonder if he truly got forgotten as the ink vines grew over his name.

Further down her arm, among the chain metal and bondage bracelets, I see a friendship bracelet, like the ones children make and share. I try to figure out if she kept this from her own childhood, or if there is a little girl in her life—child … sister … niece—who stupidly looked up to this drug fiend.

Though as far as the drug fiends, who I make my money off, go—she was always the sweetest. The only one who used "Please" and "Thank you" as more than just a beg. I would often see her comforting her overly-messed-up and jonsing fellow addicts.

I guess she notices me staring at her, 'cause she looks up at me with her big, beautiful eyes—so soulful, with a little spark of something that makes me believe she may actually be able to get away from the pull of the drugs.

She runs her tongue down the side of my dick and nibbles on my balls like the desire is real, though I know she is just trying quickly to get the job done. Just like I know my other blow buddies' only really hunger is for the needle. But this girl looks so beautiful sucking my cock.

I cum in an orgasmic burst, and for the first time in a long time, it isn't just driven by the physical sensation.

As she wipes the cum from her mouth and slowly begins to rise off the floor, I say, "That was so good, I think I should give you something extra."

"Really, I'm not using anymore," she replies quickly and with a bit of fear.

"No, I was thinking about $250 for your new life," I explain, as I fish the money out of my pocket.

"Thank you," she says, bewildered. She takes the money; her soft, warm fingers brush across my hand.

Part of me wants to grab her hand and hold it forever, and another part of me wants to never see her again.

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Horehound Stillpoint

Bio

Horehound Stillpoint is working for the Golden Gate National Park Conservancy these days, while still writing for pervert-loving poetry fans, still living for shows from Queens of the Stone Age to *Rigoletto*, and still needing and wanting to thank all his kind mothers, basically, everyone he ever came across.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I started noticing—mostly at Poetry above Paradise, on Sunday nights—that people in the audience perked up if cocks, nipples, buttfucking, watersports, etc., made an appearance in the poem and the sooner the better. But maybe that's because it galvanizes my energy so intensely. I mean, it's my thing, isn't it.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? Sure, I write in multiple genres; it's fun, it's educational, and it widens my horizons. After about 5 years of writing poetry—or rather, doing my spoken word pieces—my voice became pretty tightly honed and even started to feel like a cage. Writing short stories or micro-memoirs helped open up new possibilities.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I write with a reading event in mind. I believe "I've Seen the Future" was written for K'Vetch, and "Life Is Good" was written for the ERC. I don't think the

Erotic Reading Circle is very different from a ‘regular’ writing group for me, but then I live in San Francisco.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Umm, yeah, Horehound Stillpoint is a pen name. Greg Taylor was just too boring and already taken by numberless other people.

Life Is Good When You're Getting Fucked

Horehound Stillpoint

It occurs to me that I am in the running
for the guy who got to have the most fun
in a single lifetime
Remembering bike rides along the Embarcadero
on San Francisco nights, following blowjobs on the beach
It's hard to believe all the men I've touched
and been touched by
Even the most recent Folsom Street Fair was just the best ever
you wouldn't believe the men I got busy with in public
As cops pretended not to watch, I grabbed ass and sucked dick
on a sidewalk in broad daylight and
one guy was a long tall drink of water
Not to mention the bands I rocknfuckinrolled with on the 12th St. stage
Speaking of which, Slash unleashed some great licks last month at the Warfield
that shit is still sticking to my ribs
Sleep was a revelation at the Regency
classic, crushing, stonier-than-thou rock
A new Neil Young CD—I've been loving him for 40 years
Fireworks, light shows, starry nights smuggled in through fog
Reading great books written by friends: astonishing!
The hardest laughs and the sweetest tears
with the best of best friends
Movies on acid, swimming in Aquatic Park
Discovering yoga at age 50
Getting this old body back in shape for the umpteenth time
So that men still ask if they can fuck me
Better yet, I've been saying ***Yes*** more and more
Life is good when I'm getting fucked
And nobody, nobody, nobody ever fucked me better
than Armand did last Monday
At least I think his name was Armand
he pounded my ass so hard, a lot of shit fell outa my head

He laid down the law
I mean the first laws … the spiritual stuff
like: Thou shalt not deny my dick
He knew he was hurting me, but neither of us wanted to stop
When I finally called time out, to catch my breath
his rushed apology—*Sorry*, *sorry*—
only seemed to cover the fact that I couldn't take it
When I reminded him I just started getting fucked at the end of last year
and I'm still not like some guys who go at it every other night
He said, *Even the guys who do this every night have trouble with me*
Fifteen minutes later, we were well into Round Two
He plowed into me at a different angle, so he could go deep
There was no space for mercy and he didn't worry about nothing
When he got on top of me, burying my face in the pillow
he issued a warning: *This is my favorite position*
I can't hold back when you're giving it up like this
He put his mouth right up against my ear and said
Can you feel that?
Can you feel my dick getting harder and harder inside you?
It's growing, it's talking to your ass …
Well, you get the picture, except, oh yeah, Armand himself
He's a 33 year old black guy, not too flash
in a rough approximation of handsome
built like a college wrestler who hasn't wrestled in 8 or 9 years
If he were a woman, I'd describe him as voluptuous
All those smooth curves and bulging payloads
We could not have had more fun
Of course, I thought it was more than fun, too
When I told him my asshole was falling in love with his dick
he said, *Already? That was fast …*
He hasn't called and I'm neither surprised nor disappointed
We did what we did
there is no other story
We'll do it again if I have any say in the matter
But I'm not jumping to conclusions
I've been dropping opinions/beliefs, left and right
and not picking them back up either

I don’t know who I am and none of this seems the least bit probable
I doubt any of this would be happening if I didn’t meditate so much
Meditation is a whole other world of fun
    if you stick to it long enough
    it can make blessings and tortures drop out of nowhere
    to dazzle your senses
    till you don’t know which is which and who is who
Walking a spiritual path is a bumpy ride and a total blast
Having Jon Bernie as my guru on Monday nights is a regular riot
    he tames egos and turns on the untroubled light within
Hearing wisdom talks on Tuesday nights at the Saraha Buddhist Center
those teachers make a good case for the way to happiness
    being the exact opposite of what people usually think
Years ago and for years thereafter, I wanted to kill my father
Then I wanted to strangle my bosses
Slap my co-workers into oblivion
Throw my lover down the stairs
Get those goddamn guys over there to give me what I crave
All the while, wanting to hang my head
    in shame on top of shame
Well, sha la la, man
Balls out no matter where we are in the story
Being who I am, brother
It’s a lot easier to see the reasons to be grateful
    when someone is taking care of my ass
So I gotta count my blessings now and then
‘Cause when the shit of Hellfire rains down
I sure do count every scratch and scrape
My litany of woes can make the butchest of men roll their eyes
    and throw their hands in the air
Oh, I can clearly be a monster
    yet I come from Heaven
    and to Heaven I belong
I am a slutty, joyful, greedy, piggy, butt-boy bottom
And I will not stop
    till I have drunk every drop

I Have Seen The Future And It Is Full Of Big Dicks

Horehound Stillpoint

Tennessee Williams never choked to death on a stray bottle cap
    No matter how insistently the media reported this at the time
According to my new buddy, Bill
Who was friend and neighbor to the author of *Streetcar Named Desire*
    Glass Menagerie and *Suddenly*, *Last Summer*
Tennessee choked on a big dick and died
When I gently protest, having had my share of monster cock
    and not being able to imagine one of them so stuck in my throat
    I could die
Bill proclaims it happens and he knows it happens
    because another friend of his also died choking on a big dick
I only met Bill a few hours ago but already I am learning so much
He met me on the stairs to his apartment and asked:
    "Are you the new volunteer from New Life?"
It's New Leaf but I don't have the heart to correct such a clever mistake
"I'm 97 years old," he throws out there. "No, 91."
When he settles on 94, I don't know if it's the truth
    or just a nice compromise
"Are you gay?" is his third or forth question, and thank God I am
His conversational skills center—squarely—on the topic of big dicks
Though he also announces that Marlon Brando had a micro-dick
It's only in passing, a throwaway line, before getting back to business
Humphrey Bogart couldn't get a star-making role on Broadway
    even though he did have a big dick
Bogart was short and not classically handsome
So he went out to Hollywood where "they know what to do with big dicks"
    says Bill, adding, by the by, "He was gay, too"
Come on, Bill, I objected, what about him and Lauren Bacall
"Lauren Bacall," he harumphed, "married gay men with great regularity
"She was straight, though, unlike Katherine Hepburn
"Of course, Kate made a big show of being with that other guy with a big dick

who was also gay”
You mean Spencer Tracy?
You should see Bill smile when I come up with the name of the star
he’s trying to talk about
We’re getting on like gangbusters
I mean, this is the best conversation I’ve had in ten years
At some point I do interrupt to ask him
can we get back to Marlon Brando for a second
I mean, how do you know
he had a small dick
“I told you, I was great friends with Tennessee and he knew everything
about everyone
“Besides that, my best friend was Maynard Morrison who was a casting
director on Broadway and he sucked everyone off
“AND besides that, Marlon Brando was totally gay, not bisexual, GAY
and he used to cruise the bushes in Central Park like we all did
and no one would play with him, because [raises little finger & wags]
“Oh, you know who else had a little dick?
That German guy who starred in Marlene Dietrich’s last movie
the one in which she wore that big hat all the time”
We don’t come up with his name, and Bill is almost in tears
He can’t talk anymore, he says
He can’t write
He used to write, under a pseudonym, oh lord, he can’t remember
the title of either of the two books he wrote
All his friends are dead
All his family members, not just parents, brothers and sisters
but cousins, and nieces and nephews, all dead
After an hour, he says that besides Richard, the other volunteer from New Leaf
I’m the only friend he’s got
I’ve already seen evidence to the contrary, because his neighbors *love* him
Richard, he complains, “only comes to look through my book of big dicks”
while he lets Bill watch some old opera on his DVD player
Okay, so Bill plays fast and loose with the truth, I think
We laugh all afternoon
He doesn’t want to have sex anymore

He can’t read, his mind is fading, and his body is falling apart
He does like to watch opera but his real joy is talking about big dicks
We’ll get along just fine, I tell him
We have so much in common
Two old broken down writers who never made a dime
    living in tiny cluttered dusty apartments
We both sucked off Scott O’Hara
    and I can attest to *his* having a big dick
It’s another laugh, another misty twinkle in his eye
We’re bonding like mad, but really, he’s showing me my future
He’s teaching me to love many things because you never know
The one thing with which you will be left

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Jen Cross

Bio

Jen Cross, co-editor of *Sex Still Spoken Here*, is a writer, workshop facilitator, and performer whose work has appeared in a plethora of anthologies, including *The Healing Art of Writing 2010*, *Best Sex Writing 2008*, and *Nobody Passes*. The founder of Writing Ourselves Whole, Jen's facilitated sexuality and survivors writing workshops in the SF Bay area and at across the country. She's more honored to get to co-facilitate the Erotic Reading Circle with Dr. Carol Queen than she can say. www.writingourselveswhole.org.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I can't remember exactly how it started: whether I wrote about sex and my stepfather found out and attempted to occupy that part of my sexuality the way he attempted to occupy every other part of my life, or whether he was the one who originally demanded that I write about sex for him. In any case, trauma was intricately interwoven through this part of my erotic life, as it has been through every other part of my life. As I'm writing this, I think about Scheherazade, who spun stories for her Master so as to keep herself alive. My situation wasn't as dire as that—though I did use the stories as a way to displace his abusive attentions (at least momentarily) from my body onto the words. Then he went to jail, and I kept the words. Later, after I got away from him, I continued writing sex as a way to discover and uncover my queer surviving self, and as a way to try on a free

and radical sexuality that I lacked access to in an embodied way for many years. Sex writing has become intertwined with all writing for me: in my experience and practice, erotic writing may or may not be sexual in content, but is writing that is deeply embodied, rising out of the empowered erotic self and therefore often slippery, messy, genre-defying, disturbing, and free.

pink and devastating

Jen Cross

I know what you've heard: gossip thronged around the edges of the community, snatches here and there. You heard that Zora took me down, that I let her shove her hand up in my aching, pearly pink. But, baby, before we go any further tonight, I gotta set the record straight. If we're gonna do this, you're gonna need to know the whole story.

We met at the corner of pink and devastating, each of us trying to high highest femme the whole room, me in flouncey, spangled, peppermint-stripe tutu, stacked platform lace-up ballet shoes, a ruffled top split wide down the front (tied at the midriff), and hair sprayed within an inch of its life with Aqua Net and Pink Neon Manic Panic. Oh, and no panties. And *her*, with that fat fluffy rose boa, *first* of all, which was *so long* that it trailed on the ground behind her even as she made her way through the tight throng of the dressed (both over- and under-) at this year's Drag King contest, plus 5-inch spike heel Lucite pink puma peep toes, a matching long skirt that *flung* itself from her waist down to just above her ankles and *cleaved* along one thigh to reveal her too goddamn perfect plump (and glitter-sheened!) calves, the rose-paisley bustier, the thick dark hair in a cloisonné upsweep held together by cherry blossom chopsticks, a couple of combs, and, yes, spit and prayers—oh, and no panties—*well*. There was no keeping from setting it off. I dropped my butch escort's arm as soon as Miz Pristine made her entrance, needing all of my energy to lance through the fauxhawks and thrift store finery, plumage and socks stuffed in varying nether regions, in order to—um—make her *acquaintance*. I meant to demand some sort of tithe from her, this new-come-to-town trying to defame my own throne of highest femme in the land.

Now, she stood so you'd think she'd just come to attention (but I saw, didn't you, that she came to be *attended to*), pursed her MAC bright lips and lowered her impossibly long, impossibly fake, impossibly *PERFECT* Too Wong Foo Priscilla drag queen lashes just to half mast, shifted so that slit in her skirt shut the door on my wandering eye, focusing my attention, you could say, reminding me that, yes, I had been an adoring young butch once, too. And she put that long tongue out just a little—a *shade*, you might say—purplish rose lacquered lips split by school-perfect pink eraser

muscle, and she lit a new shine to her lips and *all* of mine then and there, thank you, and she said, "Ooh, girl, *look* at those shoes."

She grinned wide then, shadowing in and pinpointing her meaning. She said: "So *stable*."

Then she cocked one hip, 'cause it was meant to be cocked that way, popping out into and claiming more of the space that the crowed had cleared for this collision of femme dominion.

Now, some say that plain platforms, a solid chunky fat heel, is cheating when it comes to the way girls do with each other. Some say if it's not spiked it's practically flats. Maybe she was in this category. I can't say as I could tell you. Maybe she was dishing some evil shade. But let me tell you, honey, that place where my panties *ought* to have covered had my parents raised even a halfway proper lady was running thick with all the—possibilities—and I stood firm, legs spread just enough, and pelvis cocked forward, sure, and could not be jostled by the crowd. I said, "I bet you want to find out, don't you?"

Her cheeks went a red that clashed with her outfit and I checked myself a point in the femme register in the sky, 'cause even though I know about the inherent wrong of girl-on-girl competition, sometimes you just gotta win one for the home team, don't you? But really, I just wanted to keep the redness coming into those taupe cheeks.

Lord, what was coming over me? I *wanted* her in that split skirt and split thighs, all right, yes, over my big brawny girl shoulders, *all* of our tits at attention while I rocked in and out of her purple pink lower lips, the very hot red rose tootsie roll cock that I carried in my bag all ready ready, I came to realize, to be strapped not around some one of these king-y wanna-bes but instead around my meaty thighs.

Now, boys, take a picture of this, 'cause it's never happened before and it's not likely to come again. It is well know that I am not just a pillow *queen*—I am an *empress*. After a few years of topping bioboys after I started having sex as a teenager, I met an old school older butch during my first excursion to my small home town's dyke bar. The first time I laid my eyes on her, I laid down. I mean, when she laid her hands on me, I fell so hard on my back that the sky started crying. The only time I'm not on my back is when I'm on my knees. It's not just do-me, it's do away with any ideas you might have had about getting done. My pussy's so pillowy hard

and fine, there are still butches lost down there, exploring and seeking and navigating all that good terrain.

Now Miss Pristine – or Zora is how she was called by other people but I liked to call her Pristine ‘cause she was always put together like a shiny piece of plastic and she hated any kind of mess. I was shocked as hell to see her out at the Drag King contest, which was held at a warehouse space in the not-yet-*completely*-gentrified part of way downtown and had a concrete floor already coated with beer drippings, sweat, and mud. It was clustery hot and barely ventilated, so most of the girls start melting immediately after setting one manicured foot into the door (boys, too, if they hadn’t put their spirit gum on just right; there were drooping moustaches and sliding soul patches all through the room). The only time Miss P uttered the words “Do me” was after she’d fucked some tender butch bottom til ze was wrung all the way out, and *she* was finally ready to come herself. The way the story went, she’d set herself up into this tall throne, part her legs (high-heeled shoes pushing her calves into a more pornographic roundness than anyone might imagine possible), pointed one short-nailed, perfectly-polished index finger at her pussy, and the butch was to get her off with no more than thirty strokes on her clit (and *this* count was well confirmed.) The ones who tried to insert anything whatsoever into Zora’s soaking slit were summarily dismissed—they’d hear the buzzing and the “oh! Oh! Oh!”s before they hit the front door. Miss P might get a little mussed while she was fucking someone (though no one knew her not to use gloves)—a soft sheen of sweat might break across her brow, a cleft of hair might fall lose from her *coif*—but no one could ever say they’d seen her *disheveled*.

So it was not an idle thing I said there, insinuating that she might have been complimenting the stability of my footwear because she imagined me in a position compromising in more ways than one.

Zora just wrinkled her long nose at me, barely a sniff, let her eyes fall on the door to the back stage side entrance and then didn’t she just turn and part the crowd without a word.

The things I did, now, I did because of her. Everyone knows that, right? I mean, I saw her look at that side stage door before turning away and forcing me to watch her ass *switch switch switch* into the congealed crowd, all the faces of our own personal audience turning back to snatch their eyes to me, to see what I was going to do *now*, now that she had just left me and my question hanging here. I mean, still I throbbed like a woofer at a bad

‘90s dyke club, *still* I was beginning to smell my own goddamn cunt over and above the accumulated aromas of second-hand smoke and cheap-ass cologne. I worked my jaw like I was popping gum, even though my mouth was suddenly too empty and dry, and said, “Figures,” then pursed my lips and turned my own self around, pushing between two thrift-store-suit-jacketed tranny boys behind me, wiggling out of any ideas they were forming about putting me in the middle of their T-dance sandwich. I made a beeline for the bathrooms, shoved my way through the clouds of glitter and hairspray into an empty stall, locked the door and sat my shaking self down.

I didn’t stop to *think*—not on your life. I popped open the clasp of my bag and took out the nylon harness that I carry out with me to these sorts of events, so as to foreswear that sad butch song, “Oh/I didn’t plan on getting it on tonight/I’m not packing/la la la.” You know how it goes—I don’t even have to hum any bars. I settled the harness around my thighs and ass, then fitted in my Ms. Big Red, tucked her in place under the tutu ruffles and waistband, and felt something else in me thicken and harden—maybe it was my resolve. I didn’t dare touch myself, just pissed, patted dry, straightened up and shoved back out into the crowd.

I made a meandering round-about way to the stage door she’d indicated as our rendezvous with her eyes like a parting shot, like the way girls used to say, *Back playground after school—you’re gonna get it*. But the goddamn thing was *locked* when I tried to barge my way in, and it was only the long round toe of my platforms that kept me from knocking my too-urgent forehead on the cheap presswood door.

“Eager much?” came a low curdled-and-spiced voice in my ear, and I did not turn around because my knees were weak and anyway her breath was singeing my bare neck, ice and burn all at the same time. “You got the equipment to back up what you said out there?” Did I mention my case of cotton mouth? All I could do was lift up my handbag and nod. She snatched the bag away from me, and her breath came hotter on my neck.

Zora reached around me, grabbed at the doorknob, pulled it hard toward her, jamming it in to the frame, pulling herself tight into me for a moment and I felt the feathers of that boa tickling the back of my legs. Then she twisted hard and shoved, pushing the door open and shoving me through. I stumbled into the dimly lit room, trying not to fall over what would have been a strategically placed gymnast’s horse had my latest daddy been behind me, ready to bend me over and lift my skirts. What was it

doing *here*? Well, this *was* a boy's club when the dykes weren't taking it over once a year. I turned to reach for Zora, see if she meant what she'd insinuated, see if she was ready for this, but she stood stone-faced against the door, arms folded, eyes wide and furious and smoky, still that hip cocked out, creating just the line of lust that every trucker silhouettes with their hands around the air and I got to draw my eyes around the flesh.

"And just who the fuck do you think you are?" She flung at me, and my embarrassment was a hot contrast to my lust, that ache she just kept kindling in my hips and thighs and cunt. I opened my lips, though I didn't know what I was going to say, but she wasn't finished. "Don't you know who I am? How are they going to honor us if we don't honor each other, Althea?"

Oh shit. She was pulling out all the goddamn stops. But I knew this train of thought, its hazards and views, and, oh yes, its tunnels—having long argued against my own longings, over and over again, 'til the path was a well worn rut and I'd had to just go ahead and put on a pair of tall heels just to climb out to ground level, which was where I'd stayed. 'Til now.

"Come on, Zora. Don't give me that shit. We are wise enough to lay it all out for each other: Even the toppiest top has gotta get a break sometimes, and if a girl can't take care of her sister when she's in need, well, then what the fuck is a femme sisterhood for?"

"I'm not talking about taking anything away from you," I continued as I stepped closer to her. "and I'm not suggesting anyone else could recognize the heat flare up in your pretty golden eyes when you took in my shoes, then my calves, then my thighs, and then my hips—then what you were hoping came next under here. Like recognizes like sometimes, you know that."

I had no idea where this patter was coming from; I hadn't seen any goddamn such thing as what I was describing, but I needed an excuse to move closer, and she let me. Who knew it was so goddamn much work getting a girl to let you fuck her? All anyone ever had to say to me was "Hey there—got the time?" and I was flung open like a midnight refrigerator door.

But then she let me kiss her, let me lean in, put a hand on the back of her head (careful not to pull at her 'do just yet) and fit my lips onto hers. Her breath was musk-spicy and oh, shit, that hot pink tongue traced some holy new dirty alphabet in my mouth. I gripped her neck tighter, wanting to

bruise her but not sure if she'd let me, and though she didn't exactly soften, she did open and let me push all the way into and between those lips, those teeth, the teeth that had left brittle bronzing bruises on three-quarters of the bottoms in the county.

I said, into her throat, "Now you be gentle with me, and I'll give you just what you need, Z." She growled at me, tensed her jaw. Her hand dug into my hair, through the product all the way down to the scalp. She pulled hard down and in, tried to split my lip in three places. Now, I'll tell you: I am not a pain slut, and I nearly came right there.

Zora broke the kiss just as I felt myself nearly ready to forget the whole thing, about to reach for her infamous fist and shove it into me. She strong-armed me back away from her, and lifted my bag, which she still clutched in her right hand. She did not say, "Let's see what we have here," but it was clearly conveyed in that sharply drawn raised eyebrow—which then fell flat when she snapped open the clasp and found just lipstick, some quarters and my money clip. Zora lifted her face, as wide open as a top's can get with surprise and confusion, but she didn't get any words out before I had my two hands under my tulle, freeing Ms. Red from her confines. Then I met Zora's eyes with mine and put a hand on her shoulder, just a hand, just a *hint* of pressure.

And my good god, she went down. Not to her knees but into a squat, legs bent and spread wide, resting on those tall heels. I'll just let you imagine that for a minute. And then she swallowed that cock, *swallowed*, and then I realized that this was certainly a part of her repertoire. So, before she could set the pace, I put my two hands to her cheeks, and did not move my own hips, Instead, I moved her head, those lips spread just wide enough that she was clearly having to strain, back and forth on me. And yes, boys, I could feel every stroke of her tongue and lips and throat, her teeth dragging for friction. How does that happen? I fucked her mouth with deep thrusts, short and quick, coming only a little way out before I sunk clear back in. Her hands inched slow up my thighs but I stopped her, not to be distracted. "Put your hands under your skirt, Zora. Feel how wet you are."

Zora moaned around and through her full mouth—no one ever told her not to talk while her mouth was full, I guess—and there was cool on my legs where her palms had been. I pulled half way out so she could gasp, then slid back down her throat while the scent of her cunt swelled up and

around us, mixing with the dusty air and, all right, my own pussy's stink, too.

When she started really groaning, I pulled my cock up out of her throat with, "Not yet you're not coming—get up, Z." And she rose unsteady, thighs obviously over-exerted. I helped her up and let her stumble, first onto me so I could taste her again, get all that lust, god, taste my own cock, let her easy cries between my lips and tongue and feed them back to her, and then I folded her over on the horse. She caught the soft leather between her palms and let her head drop as I moved around behind her.

That's when I noticed that Zora didn't close the door all the way behind her, and, my good god, didn't we have an audience again, a hot- eyed bunch of queers so sick of waiting for the fucking contest ('cause you know the show never can start til an hour or five after they said it'd be *OVER*) that they were thrilled to have another battle to watch.

I'm not going to lie to you—I had a hard time deciding what to do. I flushed with power, suddenly desperate to be publicly witnessed deflowering top-of-the-tops Pristine. I wanted them to see how messy it was about to get, with bits of public persona shattered all around us. I wanted the boys to get a little quivery seeing how pillow-biter Althea could work the other side of the cock.

Then Zora made a sound. Oh shit, it was a whimper, it was almost a please, and I knew I had a higher allegiance. I made a sad-clown face at our watchers, then, hoping to mask the noise, shoved a gogo box out of the way with my hand while I kicked the door shut with my fat flat heels. Platforms: they're just so good for so many things.

"Turn your skirt around for me, Zora," and she did it so the slit let the material part over her round full ass, those good plump thighs, and all the dark fur around her pussy fluffed out right for me. She glistened, all her inner lips and folds slicked out from where she'd been playing with herself before.

"Hold yourself open, now, girl." She rocked a little back and forth on her heels, demand-y, but reached both hands around and parted that pussy for me. I bent down, bent *in*, and took one good long lick, smearing my face on her and making her cry out like she was warming up. You know that kind of groan a girl makes when it starts to get sweet, and then the "Un-ooh-ah?" when you stop what was making them groan so good—I invented that shit, so it didn't phase me. We were gonna get to where she needed to

go. I yanked open the fasteners on the back of my tutu and pulled it off, then, slow, balanced myself and got steady on my platforms, just like Shar says in *The Femme's Guide*. I pushed my cock into her, a little in, then out, then a little more, wetting it all up.

You see how we study what you're doing when you're working so hard over us? Then we do it better.

And oh, shit, that bitch, she started screaming—but why was it muffled? I slid all the way in and looked up, saw she had her face pressed into the leather. Oh *no*. I put one hand on her hip, and grabbed the knot of hair that the chopsticks held together, yanked her head up by it, and started to fuck her for real.

"Let it go, Zora—come on," and fuck if she didn't let loose, bucking back into me like she did this all the goddamn time. And we rode.

"Wait wait wait stop come out," Zora rambled after many minutes of this, just as I was dropping down into a *zone*. She bent around to look at me, face drenched, hair half undone, eyes racooned, and when I pulled out, she shoved off her skirt til it pooled at her feet, stepped out of it, and then she slid down off the horse and laid herself down on the cement.

Did you hear me? On the *cement*.

One of Zora's breasts had popped free from the top of the bustier and was pinched tight and flat. She spread her legs wide, all the way open, yes, heels still on, every bit as hot as I have ever wanted to look for a lover. So much longing dripped off her gaze that I felt entirely inadequate. I wanted to open the door, yank in the first butch I saw and set her to work so Z could get the fucking she so clearly deserved.

But I had made a promise, hadn't I? I knelt down on the concrete, knees already bruising, thanked some Kali-Ma/Kwan-Yin/Mother- fucking-Mary and every other femme-goddess for the foresight to have started doing Pilates again a few months previously, and slicked my cock back into her.

Before she could fill my ears entirely with her screams, I said, "You help, Zora. Get your hands back to work. I know how much attention your clit needs." Zora slid her hands across my shoulders, then pulled open my shirt and cupped my tits, easing them out of my bra so she could yank and pull at my nipples. I fucked her harder, groaning, "Oh, shit, Zora, please, your hands, get them down there—" So she moved *one* hand, the bitch, and ministering to her clit as I slammed my hips into hers, all the while working slow feathery gentle strokes across my fat nipple.

Sure enough, her pussy's grip around Mz Big Red got tight and tighter the closer Zora came to coming. When she went over, she let go of my tit, thank god, grabbing hard at my ass, bruising me, *yes*, while she bucked and bucked and bucked.

I slowed when she quieted, heard screaming on the other side of the door and knew the contest had *finally* started. Zora panted under me, pulling me down to her face with her pussy-slick hands and kissed me again. "What do *you* want, Althea?" she asked, feeding me her fingers.

And *that* was how I got to ride home on Zora's hot strong fist and forearm, shouting to the high heavens along with everyone else in the place, though my heights had to do with much more than camp and bouffants. Girls have gotta do for each other sometimes, don't we now. Shit, that's what solidarity is all about.

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“We have all been little pitchers with big ears, shooed out of the kitchen when the unspoken is being spoken, and we have probably all been tale-bearers, blurters at the dinner table, unwitting violators of adult rules of censorship. Perhaps this is what writers are: those who never kicked the habit. We remained tale-bearers. We learned to keep our eyes open, but not to keep our mouths shut.”

- *Margaret Atwood*

Norman Armstrong

Bio

Norman Armstrong has degrees in writing fields from three California universities but had to put aside his real love to earn a living. He is now a retired civil servant living in Germany, with long forays in San Francisco. He is currently working on an anthology of stories—*Do Tell*—about U.S Military personnel, of which "God's Country" is an excerpt.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? It was a subject I had some familiarity with, and after a career of writing third-person nonfiction government documents where I had to remain completely anonymous and impersonal as a writer, I wanted to inject some personality into my writing. Sex seemed an ideal subject in which to do so.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I love the ERC! It's full of smart, insightful ladies who are my only audience—and we all write for an audience, no matter what we say. They find things in my writings—especially humor—that I didn't realize were there. I arrange my visits to SF to get my creative batteries recharged with the ERC.

Do you write under your own name? Writing under my own name—certainly not! Having a *nom de plume* is a long-standing literary tradition—from the Earl of Oxford and "William Shakespeare," to Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin and "George Sand," to John Preston and "Mike McCray" and "Preston MacAdam." I wanted my name to reflect the same clean-cut

American attributes I gave to my characters, hence the name of two well-known American heroes—Neil Armstrong and "Jack Armstrong, All-American Boy."

What's the inside scoop on your story? Originally I was going to write a story about a young soldier on leave in SF who winds up shooting a porn movie, like many porn movies that advertise their participants as being fresh off the military base. But first I needed to have a story for the porn movie to be about, and when I wrote the antecedent story, the older sergeant wound up becoming the dominant character, possibly because I knew the perfect actor to play him when "God's Country" is made into a porn movie: Allen Silver of HotOlderMale.com. Thanks for the inspiration, Allen!

God's Country (Excerpt)

Norman Armstrong

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, that shelters a dry thirsty land … – Old Hymn

The CO sent out three patrols that morning—one South, one West, and one North. Our orders were simple: recon the area within a 24-hour riding range for a suitable location to set up an Army post here in this new Arizona Territory, which now belonged to the United States of America rather than the Mexicans. Look for water, elevation, protection from the God-awful sun—and Indians. And report back by the next evening, 1800 hours.

We all left the camp before sunrise to avoid the heat as much as possible; I was assigned to go North with Private Petersen, which was good; we'd seen some purple hills to the Northwest—if they weren't mirages in the heat. Hills meant water—maybe—and maybe somewhere cooler. As for Private Petersen, he was one of our youngest, and newest, troops (he'd joined the unit just before we took off out of Texas)—although his thick blond beard and moustache made him look older. He was also one of our sharpest recon men; he could tell things just from looking at rocks—and Arizona had a lot of rocks. On the downside, he didn't talk much. But I could have drawn a worse partner for the patrol—a lot worse.

Petersen and I rode along at a pretty leisurely pace, generally going North, not saying much, just looking, listening, getting the lay of the land. When I looked at my pocket-watch, it was about nine; we'd been riding for three hours, the landscape hadn't changed much, the hills didn't seem to be getting any nearer—and that Arizona sun was already getting pretty hot. Plus, I had on a set of those fuckin' wool long johns the

U.S. government issued to all its soldiers, regardless of the climate; I was itching everywhere under my equally-regulation wool uniform. "These long johns are hell, aren't they?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let's stop and take a piss." "Yes, sir."

We pulled the horses up by one of the big cactuses that offered the only shade available, dismounted, unbuttoned, and pissed, facing away from each other. There wasn't much privacy in the Army, but you at least didn't have to piss in front of your partner.

“Sergeant?” “Yes, Petersen?”

“Do you hear something? Like water running?” “No … can’t say that I do.”

“I do—off to the West … and the ground is sloping a little here … like it might be leading down to a gully or something … there might be water there.”

“Well, let’s find out, Private.” We mounted up and turned West—the sun to our backs—and followed the slope of the ground. The slope gradually became more obvious. A wall of sheer rock started rising up on our right, and then the gully turned to the right—and we were in the shade of that wall—and then I heard the sound of running water as well—Petersen was right! The slope got rapidly steeper, so we dismounted and let the horses lead, knowing they would follow the smell of the water; the gully gradually opened up into a full gorge with cliffs of rust-colored rock rising up on both sides of it—and in the distance in front of and below us—if it wasn’t a mirage—was the shimmer of a body of water at the base of the cliff that was now sheltering us. We descended the steep side of the gully slowly for maybe half an hour, until we reached the relatively level floor of the gorge. And within a few minutes we found a little stream—very little; we could wade across it.

“It’s gotta come from that pool we saw as we were coming down. But I still hear water running—and this little trickle isn’t making that noise.”

“Yes, sir.”

We let the horses drink, then knelt at the stream and drank ourselves; the water was sweet and cold. When we got up, Private Petersen held his hands together for just a minute, bowed his head and mumbled something. The boy was religious!?! Like I said, he didn’t say much, so I didn’t know much.

We mounted the horses again and rode upstream, maybe a mile, and then we came to the pool—no mirage!—and saw the water spurting out of the side of the cliff and falling into the pool, the sound we—or more correctly, Private Petersen—had heard back on top of the butte when we had stopped. Suddenly I felt old—even if I had just turned 40 a few months before; Petersen had out-scouted me, no sense denying it! He’d heard the water and I hadn’t!

But I put the philosophizing aside for the moment. Cool, clear water and all of it I could possibly drink—or bathe in. Bathe! Yeah! We walked

the horses out on the flat rock shelf to the edge of the pool and let them drink again. Then we got down on our knees and drank a little more ourselves. Private Petersen went through the same little spiel when we got up—a quick clasping of hands, bowing of head and a mumble, and it was over.

"Let's find something here for the horses to feed on, and then we're going to get out of these itchy uniforms and take a nice long dip in this water." I didn't wait for a response, just grabbed my horse by the bridle and led him to the south end of the pool where the rock shelf gave way to earth and some small trees and green plants. I put a hobble on his front legs so he could graze but not run away; Private Petersen did the same.

"Now, Private, let's take care of ourselves." I walked back to the rock shelf—to a little rise, sort of, in the middle that you could see from all around—lay down my rifle, threw down my cap, sat down, pulled off my boots and socks, my tunic, then stood up and dropped my pants and stripped out of those hellish long johns—I was not going to put those back on today—and tossed them on top of the rest of my gear. I was naked! For the first time in weeks I was fully and freely naked! It felt great! I stood and stretched—up to my tiptoes, then held my hands up to the sky like I was some Holy Roller back in Virginia, gave a good healthy yell and started down toward the water. Only then did I become aware that Private Petersen, rather than stripping down with me, was just standing there, still in full uniform, looking at me with a strange expression on his face.

"What are you waiting for, Private? Drop those duds and let's cool off

"But, sir …"

"You can drop the military courtesy for the time being, Petersen; it's not required when the personnel involved are bareass—and you *are* going to get yourself bareass and enjoy this water, aren't you?"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but …" Petersen was nervous; he was turning red behind his beard and moustache, and I could see sweat on his face, even though we were in the shade of the cliff; he was trying to look me in the eye, but his eyes kept slipping down … to about the level of my dick, which was celebrating its own liberation from those itchy long johns by getting itself ready to stand up and salute—I could feel the heat, the growing heaviness between my legs; I didn't have to look down to see what was happening.

"What's the matter, Petersen? Haven't you ever seen a grown man naked before?"

"Uh … yes, sir."

"Well then, what's the problem?" " I … I …"

"Are you embarrassed? About what? You've got the same equipment I do, don't you—two balls and a hunk of meat hanging between your legs. It's nothing to be embarrassed about."

I don't run around showing my "hunk of meat" off … but … there's a time and a place … and this seemed to be both. I spread my legs a little and threw open my arms so Private Petersen could take a good look at me. I didn't look too bad for being 40. Body still in good shape: broad chest—although most of my chest hair had turned silver, matching what I had on my head and face—and I still had a good firm stomach and waist; most of the trousers the Army issued me hung on me pretty loose while the tunics were sort of tight. And my legs were nice and muscular from holding a horse between them all the time—I mean, a real horse, although what I had between my legs had been compared a few times in my life to a horse, but that was mostly by whores, and whores are part of an ancient and honorable profession, but that didn't mean you should take as gospel everything they told you either—before or after you paid them. Partner knew he was on display, even if it wasn't for the usual reason he got shown off—there wasn't a woman in hundreds of miles—and kept right on growing to attention … with even more enthusiasm. I still didn't look down; I knew what he looked like when he got happy—about eight inches, and good thick inches. I just kept looking at Private Petersen; I was showing him my body—and my hard-on went with it. I was sure he'd seen one of those before, too, at least his own. But he was acting sort of like a virgin … I wondered … but the sex life of my soldiers was none of my business …

After a minute or so of watching me standing there bareass, showing my stuff, the expression on Petersen's face changed … took on some determination … like when a soldier gets a mission assignment … he turned away from me and practically marched up the incline to where I'd thrown my gear. He lay down his rifle, sat down, pulled off his boots and socks, set the boots neatly side by side, stood up again, took off his cap, put it down carefully next to his boots, then pulled off his tunic, folded it, placed it carefully over his rifle, pulled off his trousers, folded them, put them neatly on top of his tunic, unbuttoned his long johns … and then

modestly turned his back toward me as he pulled them off his shoulders, down over his ass—God damn!—and then bent over—I damned God again —and pulled them off over his ankles. He picked them up, folded them neatly and put them on top of his trousers, then leaned over again—this time I thanked God rather than damning him—picked up his hat and put it on top of his neat pile of clothing, like he was preparing for inspection. Then he turned around and faced me, his hands modestly over his crotch.

To be real blunt about it, he was beautiful. The curly golden hair on his head and his face—it descended down his broad chest, his slim white body, his long shapely legs, in an unbroken wave of golden fur; he radiated light —like the clouds in one of the spectacular sunrises we'd been seeing every morning. This time I praised God rather than just thanking Him; underneath that scratchy Army uniform was the Glory of the Lord—or close enough. I stood staring for a long moment; he looked back at me … uncomfortable … but determined … a man on a mission—although I wasn't sure what the mission was.

Finally I remembered to breathe. I started to say something, but my throat was dry, despite the water I'd just drunk. I cleared it and tried again. "You … you can't stand there all day with your hands over your dick, Petersen. You might as well let me see it and get it over with."

"Yes, sir." He moved his hands away and put them behind him—parade rest; a natural position for a soldier. Talk about the Glory of the Lord! My eyes were beholding it! Private Petersen's dick was pink … and long … nine inches? … and hard … very hard. It sprang up from between his legs like it had some place to go, something to do, in a hurry, and then settled down to about 90 degrees to survey the territory around it—like a good Army scout.

"Well … you look good and healthy." "Yes, sir."

"Bet you've made a lot of women happy with that."

"No, sir. That'd be a-whorin', and that's an abomination. The Bible says so."

Abomination … there was a word I hadn't heard for a while. "Well, at least one or two special ones; a shame not to share a gift

like what the Good Lord has blessed you with; remember the parable of the talents." I can talk religion when I have to.

"No, sir … I haven't." "Not one?"

“No, sir.” His voice got very soft, and his face lost some of its determination, and he looked young and … I felt a twinge somewhere in my chest … maybe in the area of my heart. “Not one.”

What a waste—what a fuckin’ waste—literally.

“Then I bet you’ve left a string of broken hearts behind you.” “Just one, sir.” Again, the voice was very soft. “Mine.”

…

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“You do not have to be good.”

- *Mary Oliver*
(*from* “*Wild Geese*”)

Eugenia Mills

Bio

Even more than crafting the story itself, Eugenia Mills particularly enjoys the field research. A chef and creator in a variety of areas of design and writing, she's also proud mother to a young adult daughter. Currently, she divides her time between Canada and Mexico.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? The erotic stories I write are all semi-autobiographical. So, first I make a good story, then I put it into words. This is certainly much easier to write than fiction, as the only imagination involved was what took place in the field, as it were! The main struggle with erotic writing, I find, is coming up with descriptive language that is hot, just dirty enough, and flows naturally.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? Discovering the ERC was a revelation. It was a delight to share my writing with others who don't struggle with the negative reactions and judgements that others may find themselves having to get past before being able to discuss the quality of the writing itself.

Do you write under your own name? Why or why not? Do you have any concerns about publishing erotic work? Much as I'd like to write under my own name, the internet allows no room for privacy so I thought it best not to.

What's the inside scoop on your story? Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants. Otherwise, it's 99% true.

It Just Takes Practice

Eugenia Mills

There wasn't anything particularly hot about her—she was pretty average looking, in fact. Medium height, average body, short brown hair—kind of cute, I guess, but not the type I'd normally go for. There was just something about the way she strode onto the elevator and confronted all the bored faces staring back at her. She grinned, like she was in on a joke that no one else had heard, and there was this kinda sexy cockiness about her attitude. Obviously it did something for me—my hard-on tented up the crotch of my pants. Luckily I was carrying my laptop bag.

I had been running late and had forgotten to put panties on. I rarely wear dresses but my boss had specifically requested that I "present myself formally" for the meeting, so I was making my best attempt at femme. It was warm enough for late October to not wear pantyhose, but I'd debated it for a minute anyway: I'd bought them specifically, thinking they were probably required to satisfy the "formal" criteria. Truth is though, I would have been yanking at them awkwardly all day long, so instead I'd checked my calves for stubble, then shoved my feet into my shoes and ran out of the house. In my haste and indecision, I forgot to put panties on. Now, after sitting for two uncomfortable hours in a sticky, vinyl-upholstered chair in the client's boardroom, I can feel that the warmth has separated my pussy hairs into damp, curling tendrils. I was just thinking about this sensation as I stepped onto the elevator, when a guy in back caught my eye. I met his gaze firmly —hoping to telepathically let him in on my little secret—then, like everyone else, I turned to face the elevator doors.

As I followed her out into the street, I wasn't exactly sure what I planned to do. She was much older than me—was I taking a stupid risk? But as I walked behind her watching the silky fabric slide against her hips and ass with no sign of a panty line, all I could think was that I wanted to get under that dress.

I can tell I am being watched. I throw my shoulders back; my hips sway a little more enticingly for the benefit of my audience. I admit it—I'm a bit of an exhibitionist. I am pretty sure who it is, and cast a quick glance back

to confirm. Yes, it's the guy from the elevator, and he is close behind … now what? He seems pretty young … I can't quite say how young from that brief moment when I first spotted him, but best to keep walking.

She has passed the building where I work as concierge. Now what? Do I keep following her? I hesitate and pull my cell phone out of my pocket. Shit—it's 1:40. I have gone overtime on my lunch break. I glance down the street and see her turn the corner. I guess that's it. As I get closer to the revolving doors, I can see my boss standing in the lobby. Better get back to work.

I'm about to turn the corner to where my car is parked. With another quick look over my shoulder, I see him turn into the doorway of a building. I pause, then double back.

She's standing outside the window. I check my boss' status—he's chatting up a hot condo resident he's been obsessing about lately. He'll be distracted for a while. I wave and beckon her in, and she responds with a hint of that same grin I'd noticed earlier. My cock immediately reacts. She approaches the reception desk where I sit with my hard-on now straining at the seams of my pants. I'd love for her to know how hard she's made me, but instead of being so blatant, I write my name and phone number on a card, and slide it across the counter to her. I have to see you, I say. OK, she replies, and leaves without another word.

Peter 455-6737. It's a little after 8pm and my daughter is in bed asleep. I have dialed the first 6 digits. Of course he wants to fuck me and I am not only curious, but also increasingly desperate as a single mom with a small child at home. I press the last digit: 7. He answers almost immediately. My thumb is ready on the "end call" button, but the tingle between my legs says keep going.

"I want to taste you." That is exactly what I want, so I tell her right away. I don't feel like messing around with chitchat. I want her to know what I want and why I want it. My girlfriend thinks oral sex is disgusting. I can fuck her all I want, missionary style, but I am her first and she is shy. That's what she says, anyway. I try to explain all this to this strange woman.

I am nervous and excited and it all comes out in one long sentence. I tell her that I need to know if there is something I can do to make my girlfriend love it. She tells me her name is Maggie.

Perhaps giving him my real name wasn't the best idea, this guy who claims he only wants to test his skills and pleasure me with his tongue and fingers. Nothing for himself! He says his girlfriend doesn't want it; he needs to know if it's because he's doing something wrong. I'd have to analyze that, I say. When are you available? He tells me his work schedule—he can get here by 10:15 almost any weeknight. Come Wednesday, I say, simply because it is the one night my daughter spends at her father's—and I give him my address. I will wait for you on the second floor deck, I tell him. I hear his nervous exhale through the receiver as he replies, OK, Wednesday. And we say goodbye.

I can't concentrate. It's Wednesday and all I can think about is what she might taste like, feel like. I have a perpetual hard-on. At 9:30 I break into a sweat, suddenly wondering if I am crazy. I could be putting myself at risk of total humiliation. Now it's 10pm and I am on my bike. It seems to know where I want to go. My mind has turned to mush and I'm glad the route is straightforward. Adrenaline surges through me, and I pedal furiously, racing through amber lights and near-misses as a door opens from a parked car. I'm barely fazed, as my body buzzes with feverish anticipation.

He should be here soon. I am confident he will come; for some crazy reason I trust the vibe I got from him. My tenants are home downstairs; I've placed the phone next to me with their number on speed dial. I love an adventure, but you never know, right? I am wearing a skirt, no panties, of course, and have folded up a large thick blanket to cushion his knees. Trying to ignore the anxious flutterings in my belly, I sit back and sip my glass of wine.

I lock my bike to the fence in front of her house. She had said to go in the front door and upstairs to the second floor. Why stop now? The door is unlocked, just as she'd said it would be. I can practically taste her and hope for a full, dark bush concealing a salty sea-clam. I can't wait to bury my nose in it and dip my tongue in deep. I take the stairs two at a time, run my

fingers back through my hair, feeling the dampness of a light sweat. Fortunately, the evening is cool.

Neither of us speaks. He immediately kneels at my feet, his breath coming quick on my thighs as he lifts my skirt. I suspect he took the stairs running. He slides his hands gingerly up my inner thighs and murmurs, So soft. I hope he doesn't mind a full bush—Brazilians and landing strips are just not my thing, but I do keep myself trimmed. At the gym, I notice more and more women with their mounds bare as the day they were born—this strange girl-child aesthetic seems to have become the ideal, but to me, it's pervy in all the wrong ways. Plus, it must be torture when it begins to grow in … but these thoughts are distracting me from the moment. He hasn't wasted one precious second getting down to business—the end of his nose nuzzles my clit and his tongue is all over my opening, lapping like a kitten at a bowl of milk. I slide down in my chair to open myself to him more and he responds with longer licks, his tongue flat, soaking me. He teases my asshole with the tip of his tongue; my cunt is opening, throbbing.

I wish I could see better, but the fabric of her skirt is blocking out the dim light from the lanterns on her deck. She smells amazing—clean, but not perfume-y—with a sweet saltiness like the Raspberry Point oysters I stole from the cocktail party I worked at last summer. That briny taste of the sea and the slippery-soft texture of the flesh stayed with me. Her bush is just as I'd hoped and the soft springy hairs add to the delicious sensations as they tickle my lips and cheeks. I think I must possess some kind of superpower to have detected this perfect pussy on a perfect stranger who would end up so willing. I spread her lips apart with both hands and dive in deep. She moans quietly.

He's not doing a thing wrong. This, in fact, is the best damn licking I've had by man or beast. He has my clit between his lips and is tugging and sucking, like he's blowing a tiny little cock. It's having a similar effect; I feel the heat of blood rushing to the tiny area, swelling my clit like a mini hard-on. Between his saliva and my juices, a pool of wetness has gathered in the crack of my ass, soaking the fabric of my skirt where my tailbone presses into the seat-cushion of the chair. Should I warn him when I am about to gush? No. If he doesn't know how to respond with appreciation, it's time he learned. How many times have I had to handle a load of bitter come

suddenly filling my mouth? *Then I realize I can't even picture what he looks like*, *so I reach down and weave my fingers through his hair in the hopes that the feel of it will help me recall his face*.

She has her fingers in my hair, pulling my face into her. I love her insistence, and the way she is grinding into me. She seems to be really into it, and her juices are soaking my chin as I work her clit hard with my teeth and lips. Never tried this technique before, but it seems to be working well.

Seriously, *isn't he going to want to get off My mind fl to the weirdness of this situation*. *How in hell did I end up with such … service*? *Again I remind myself to lie back and just enjoy*, *wondering why it is so hard for me to be selfish. I turn to my usual technique for dealing with the distraction of my thoughts*: *I take a slow*, *deep breath into my core*, *in the hope of shifting my energy from my mind back down to my cunt where it belongs*. *I pant lightly*, *making my diaphragm and pelvis pulse with each inhale/exhale*. *His tongue is now full-on inside me*; *this guy seems eager to bring it home*. *Despite those moments of wandering thoughts*, *my body knows what's good*, *and responds with hot*, *hungry desire*. *I want to be fucked so badly—if he'd just give it to me with his fingers, four*, *or … mmm … oh God … his fists! Are his hands big*? *I don't remember*. *I just want to be filled. Fuck me! I am screaming in my head*.

Should I use my fingers inside her? Now that we are in the middle of things I am not sure where the boundaries are. I want to feel all the warmth and wet, but I'd have to take my mouth away and I just want to taste her more. She is humping my face now, her hips off the chair, back arching. I want to get inside, so the hell with it, I just will. Let her slap me if she wants to. I don't want to be disrespectful, but I want so bad to make her come. Her cunt is wide open; one finger seems lost in there so I go for it with all four. She moans loudly and is fucking my hand, opening more, then contracting around my fingers, tight and hot. I am so hard, so excited, I'd give anything to fuck her, but this is what I asked for and I am getting it good.

I didn't have to tell him what I wanted, *and I glance down to see him seemingly mesmerized by what he's got going on*. *I am pumping at his*

fingers with my greedy cunt and when he leans down to drag his tongue over my clit I go right over the edge. An explosion of color behind my eyes: a psychedelic swirl of vivid reds, orange, purple … I am so close. He gets it and keeps pushing me, licking and sucking while his fingers fill me and I am humping back at him, hard. His thumb is in my asshole now and I push myself up on my hands so I can get more thrust. He comes back at me voraciously, knowing not to let up. My whole body is vibrating and hot, my clit is pulsating, burning. A sound starts to roll through my diaphragm like thunder—I hear it in my head like it is in the distance. I … am … going … to ….

Holy shit—her cunt opens so wide that there is a void around my fingers and for a moment I think I could fit my entire hand inside her. Then, just as suddenly, every single muscle squeezes back down, tight. Before I can think about whether I should pull out, I discover I have no choice. She is coming with a force I've only seen acted out in porn. Like a geyser, hot liquid streams from her cunt, soaking my face, my chest. And all this is accompanied by a sound that comes not from her throat, but deeper down in her belly, like the passionate roar of an animal in heat. I am literally floored.

Catching my breath. He is sitting at my feet. Peter. No indication of shock or disgust—bonus points for that. He is caressing my calves, and, after a few minutes says: Should I go? I don't know what would happen if he were to stay so I tell him yes. You did nothing wrong. Nothing at all, I tell him. I hope he can see that I am smiling – I am exhausted, even the act of turning my lips up at the corners seems to take more energy than I have left.

Is it ok to want more? Practice, I mean. Truth is, I really love my girlfriend. All I want is to make her happy. Is there anything wrong with that? I look down at Maggie, her skirt is still pulled up, and her pubes are all damp and matted down. She seems spent, a little dazed, and I have a pretty good feeling she is satisfied, considering the puddle on the floor. I want to ask when I can do her again, but instead I ask her if I should go. When she tells me I did a good job, it spills out: When can I do it again?

Come back any time, I smile. You definitely need more practice.

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Joy West

Bio

Joy West speaks sex, sensuality, and fluent feline. She writes about salt and thirst, Frida Kahlo's braids, and the scamper of an armadillo. Her work appeared in *Labyrinth*, *eyelevel* and *Art Matters*; she has been a featured reader at The Last Word and the Painted Bride reading series in Philadelphia.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I write about sex so that I remember I want to fuck. While writing, I find longing and fill my wounds with ink. My libido, my drive for skin and intimacy, is often on a long leash—she wanders off and winds herself around trees. I try to walk forward but she yanks; I hear her yapping behind me, sometimes growling for attention. I wish I could untether myself from this desire beast but she is mine and I am her: lone wolf, Shepherd, and lap dog. Writing helps me face the teeth and slobber of my little Bitch, Libido.

What's the inside scoop on your story?
About *Fern*: I had eaten fiddlehead ferns for the first time while visiting Vermont in early May, prime fiddlehead season. It seemed strange and wonderful, to eat this spiral plant that had not yet unfurled. I was taking a class in sustainable treehouse building at a school called Yestermorrow and the cook had carefully foraged for the edible fiddleheads that are not poisonous for us. We enjoyed them chilled in a balsamic dressing in the common kitchen.

About *Reading*: This poem is based on a real event in which someone I know who is basically kind but who rattles me started talking to me on public transit. I pulled out a book and suggested reading so we wouldn't have to talk. I had forgotten I'd marked a poem of Louise Glück's called "Dream of Lust." We took turns reading aloud and my reading companion proclaimed, "that was great" when we finished. I did kiss her cheek and was charmed that poetry could soften me toward someone I had wanted to dodge. I also wondered if sharing a sexy poem in the public space of a trolley might even turn strangers into lovers.

Reading

Joy West

In the spine
lay the edge of the rectangle
slicing two pages of
DREAM OF LUST, 46-47.

I forgot what I had marked.
We were on the trolley.
Let's read poems.
I offered
to silence her chatter:

Temp. jobs, *overqualified for mailroom*,
and what are your plans after layoff?

I move to the back,
so does she.

Let's read poems. She held the right side
and I the left of the hardcover.
Open to Glück's dream. Aloud, she read:

> *unexpected animal …*
> *You are ridiculously young …*

People in front but no one turns. This, ours with
> *… odd lumbering gaucheness*
> *that became erotic grace*.

22nd St., 19th., I rush to finish before City Hall
That was great! she said, hug and
I kiss her cheek. Glance mouth, so close.

> *the human body a compulsion*, *a magnet*.

Indented quotes from Louise Glück “Dream of Lust” in *The Seven Ages*, 2001.

Fern

Joy West

I eat Spring.
Fiddleheads. Snap
the spirals. Facing
each other but wound,
they grow shy.
Savor this curl.

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“Literature—creative literature—unconcerned with sex, is inconceivable.”

- *Gertrude Stein*

Gina de Vries

Bio

Gina de Vries is a writer, cultural worker, queer cripple, genderqueer femme, Paisano strega, fat sex worker, and devout pervert born, raised, and currently living in San Francisco. Ze is founder of Sex Workers' Writing Workshop, founder of the Girl Talk performance series, and on the Advisory Board at The Center for Sex & Culture. Ze's performed, taught, and lectured everywhere from chapels to leatherbar backrooms to the Ivy Leagues, and hir writing has been anthologized dozens of places. Ze is currently at work on *How To Have A Body*, a book of experimental prose. Read more at ginadevries.com

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? I write for a ton of different reasons, but one of the biggest ones is that writing is a tool that helps me make sense of my life and the world around me. I started to develop an awareness of myself as a sexual being—and, specifically, as a queer sexual being—when I was very young (I came out as queer in middle school). I would say that I started writing about sex and sexuality around that time (pubescent diaries absolutely count, in my book!). So I was writing about sex and desire and embodiment long before I ever actually had sex with another human being, and I just kinda … never stopped. Middle-school diaries that I never showed a soul eventually morphed into embarrassingly earnest queer feminist erotic poetry that I published in 'zines as a teenager … which eventually morphed into what I do as a writer, performer, and cultural

worker today. It's honestly very hard for me to differentiate between my erotic and non-erotic work at this point in my life. While not all of my work is explicitly pornographic or written to get the reader off, the overwhelming majority of my writing is about sexuality and embodiment in some way, shape, or form. I've never for a second been interested in leaving the sex out of my work, or "toning it down" for the sake of some hypothetical conservative audience. I'm gonna end by quoting from *How To Have A Body* (my current manuscript in progress) here, because it feels relevant to this question, and to how I work and how I understand my artistic vision and process: "I know in my heart of hearts that creative drive and erotic drive are inextricably and undeniably linked. I can't write if I can't come. I can't feel the peak of a story or a poem if I can't feel the peak of my own orgasm. I don't wanna write when I don't wanna fuck, and I don't wanna fuck when I don't wanna write."

Bambino

Gina de Vries

I'd told him to dress like a teenager going on a first date, and he came over that night looking sharp—all James Dean tough and tender. Black curls coiffed into a greaser pompadour, leather jacket and dark jeans and pressed button-down shirt hugging his tall, slim frame. He'd just seen *East of Eden*, he said. "The hype is real—James Dean really is that hot. I'm kind of in love."

I grinned. "So that's why you're dressed like a greaser!"

He nodded. "Yeah. The movie's probably better when you're stoned, because it's a little slow. But it's awesome, and James Dean …" His eyes got all dreamy again.

"Do you wanna fuck him or do you wanna be him, Bambino?" "Um. Both." He blushed.

***

He made me wish I had a record player, that boy. A record player and a clawfoot tub, real silk stockings and a rotary phone. A collection of vintage garter belts and a smart little sixties miniskirt that inched up my thighs slowly when I spread my legs. A dress for him to unzip down the back while I insisted that of course I wasn't doing anything untoward and really, I was getting tired of him insinuating something. He made me want a beret and a first edition of *Howl*, a couple of joints and a bottle of red wine to seduce him into the wicked Bohemian lifestyle. He made me want an apron collection, a real kitchen, and a real dining room. A table where I could feed him after-school snacks and help him with his homework, undo his belt while he struggled with a Math problem and tried to ignore how good my hands felt.

What I had to work with was a tiny rent-controlled apartment, thrift store lingerie, and a limitless imagination. We started dating right before I started graduate school and moved into an impossibly cheap in- law studio in the South Mission. The day after our first date, he offered to help me move. He ended up stuck in transit on a trip back from Oregon—never made it to move-in. But five days later, he was the first person I fucked in my new bedroom.

I'd never lived alone before. This was a place with a fig tree in the backyard, an old-school San Francisco Chinese grandmother landlord who offered to let me pay rent in cash, and a sketchy little alleyway between buildings that led up to my doorstep. I wanted to throw him around in that alley, but there was zero privacy—no way to do it without alerting my new neighbors to the intimate details of my sex life. This was a place with a kitchenette table that doubled as a counter, and a main room that just barely held my bed, my bookshelves, my desk, and my clothes. But it didn't matter that it was tiny—it was mine, all mine. I could put whatever I wanted on the walls, have loud sex without disturbing my housemates, sing opera at three in the morning if the whim struck me. Everything about that month felt limitless, imbued with magic and newness—my new school, my new apartment, my new neighborhood, my new cat. And him.

And I didn't have an apron collection or a first edition of *Howl*, so I worked with what I did have. I started scouring thrift store racks, looking for the slips with 42-inch bustlines and lots of give in the tits. I grabbed every H&M size 12 camisole off the rack and stretched them over my curves. I bought $9 stay-up stockings at Madame S and $2 fishnets from MultiKulti Dance Accessories on 16th and Valencia. I justified every new purchase, no matter how extravagant or frivolous, with "Well, I can use it in a role-play, right? This slip is actually a very reasonably priced sex toy!" I started wearing more makeup. Dangly earrings instead of my tough-girl gauged lobes. Flowers in my hair. "Hellfire" from Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab dabbed into the sweet spots behind my ears and between my breasts.

I was only a year older than him, but when we went out together, we really did look the part. Me like Mrs. Robinson in my leopard-print skirt and garters and stockings. Him like Benjamin in his pressed pants and shirt, that dark mop of curls, big eyes and pale creamy skin. The adorable jolty way he moved when he was nervous, or excited—so much boy energy to burn. Dimples in his cheeks when he smiled. The tentative, tender, teenage way he'd ask permission to touch me, or lean into the crook of my neck and sigh, so happy.

I was wearing fishnets with stompy boots in the pit at Cypher in Snow shows by the time I was fourteen, calling myself queer and punk and femme even then. Pervert came a few years later, when I was still a teenager. When I met him, I'd been a die-hard Daddy's girl for years; I'd

even been Ma'am and Mistress a few times. But I'd never been in charge all the time. I'd never been anyone's Mama before.

***

"So much of this," he said to me, "is about getting to have the adolescence I didn't get to have." We were stretched out in my bed, him in his greaser finery, me in my lingerie, catching up on our weeks before we got carried away by sex.

"I thought you might say something like that," I said. I still didn't know much about his life, then. But I know what it is to be raised to be a good girl, what it is to be expected to grow into a proper woman; and I know what it is to fail at that. I can't imagine what it's like to be held up to the Girl Standard when you're actually a boy waiting to grow into a man. "You know … It's like that for me, too," I said, "When I play Mama with you, sometimes. And when we both pretend we're teenagers …"

And he looked surprised. "But weren't you, like, the cool punk girl who came out all early? Like, didn't you do zines and all this awesome writing and—?"

"Yeah, I mean, I was punk and I was queer, but I was a nerd and I was a fat girl, too. Publishing a zine didn't get me laid in high school, dude." And we both cracked up at that.

"It's funny," I said, "I mean, I think the kids I went to school with thought I was a slut because I was queer, so, you know, that automatically makes you hypersexual—"

"Right, of course, they always think that—"

"—and, I mean, I dressed the part, and I talked about sex. But I only had sex with one person in high school. I wanted to be slutty, but …" I trailed off. Tried to find the words. "It wasn't something I had access to. Some of what I do with you, when we pretend like that … It's about getting to be who I would have been if I'd actually been in my body. If I'd believed I was pretty. Believed I could be sexy like that."

***

Sometimes I felt myself existing in the timeline of all the characters we played. Not just frozen at that age, but frozen in that time period. So when we pretended I was a bossy riot grrrl and he was the shy, younger grunge-rock boy who was friends with my dorky little brother, it wasn't 2009 in my

studio. It was 1999 at my parents' house, and I was seventeen, playing him my Bikini Kill 7-inch and inching too close to him on my bed. I knew better than to be fooling around with my kid brother's friend—it was kinda questionable around the age thing, it was even more questionable when it came to the crowds we hung out in. But it was so much fun to make him squirm and swear him to secrecy, and God, he was such a quick study with that mouth, those hands, that cock.

The night he came over dressed up like a greaser I was in a red slip, fishnets, red heels. A glittery red cloth rose in my hair. Could I be a fifties housewife in this? I thought as we chatted. He was telling me more about James Dean. Maybe. A very seductive one, at least. We were lying on my bed together, close but not cuddling. I caught his chin in my hand and pulled him in for a kiss. He wrapped his arms around me, but he pulled his lips away after a minute.

"We're doing that thing we do," he murmured into my neck, kissed it. "Mmm. We're doing that thing, where we start before the scene starts …"

"Oh, so you wanna work for it?" I grabbed his pompadour and pulled. He winced at first, cried out. But then he giggled. Nodded.

"I wanna work for it. Yes. I want a story." I let him go. It was hard not to touch him.

"Okay, Bambino … How old do you wanna be? "Sixteen? Seventeen, maybe?"

"Okay, I think … I'm a housewife. You're my son's friend …" "I've had a crush on you for a long time, yeah."

"And you've come over … And my husband happens to be on a business trip. And my son's out with those hoods he runs with." I felt my voice start to change, subtly. It got lower. More serious. "Why are you over here, kid? Shouldn't you be out with those boys, too? Not that I approve …"

His eyes got big. He had never looked more earnest to me. "No, I'm good, Ma'am. I don't hang out with those boys. I don't like that your son hangs out with them." Then he cracked a smile. Started laughing. "Wait, wait—I'm sorry, I just thought of something. Can I be fucking your son, too?!"

That got me laughing. "Pervert!"

"No, no, hear me out. So you want me, but you're angry with me, because I'm taking your son away from you. You want me, but you think

I'm a bad influence."

"You're a glutton for punishment, little faggot." I grabbed a curl and pulled again.

He shrieked, but he looked like the cat with the canary in his mouth. "Guilty as charged."

***

I listened to *Diamond Dogs* over and over again the summer we got together. If I'd had the record player, I would have worn out the vinyl, I'm sure. Music takes on a different meaning when you're falling for someone, and I was falling, hard—for him, but for my new self, too. The whole relationship was a coming out moment, coming out into something different and new, and like most people who are newly out and overzealous, I ran into it full-tilt, no holds barred, not a single stop or hesitation. No checking to see if there were any obstacles. No worries that maybe I'd trip over that rock and skin my knee. I didn't think. I just ran. Everything was intense; everything felt like a whirlwind of emotions and sex. I still use words like *pivotal* and *formative* to describe our months together, and god, I fear I'm being grandiose, melodramatic, talking that way. But that's what it was. It's how we were with each other.

So that month, falling for him, listening to *Diamond Dogs* because it happened to be what I'd picked up from the library on a whim—suddenly, I took the album very personally. It was the soundtrack to the crush, and it was the soundtrack to my newfound Mama persona. It felt like every line of every song was written especially for me. "Sweet Thing" was an anthem, Bowie's creepy-sexy snarl in my ear, the perfect music for dating this boy who was glam rock and choir boy, French new wave and faggotry, lisp and snarl, James Dean and Lou Reed, cocksure and shy violet. Dating this boy who wanted nothing more than to suck my cock, who wanted nothing more than to fuck me so good, just right. *When you rock'n'roll with me*, *there's nowhere else I'd rather be*. *We're taking it hard all the time*. *I love you in your fuck-me pumps*, *and your nimble dress that trails*. *Boys*, *boys*, *it's a sweet thing*. *Mmm*, *if you want it*, *boys*? *Get it here*.

***

His hands on my tits were sweet, that night. Tentative. "Oh, honey. You're not so tough, are you? You're just a little pussycat under all that

bravado, huh?" He made a little whimpering noise—the pink rose to his cheeks and his eyelashes fluttered. But he didn't take his hands away. Something about how soft and unsure he was made me want to up the ante.

"Nobody's touched me like this for a long, long time. Not my husband. Not my son." I heard him catch his breath at that. Good. "Nobody." I leaned in to kiss him. He was so pliant in my arms, a rag doll of a boy, a marionette, but god, the noises he made. Little moans and sighs, and he licked the crook of my neck and whispered. "Oh, your skin tastes so sweet, Ma'am. I like it."

I pushed him back on the bed. He kept looking up at me in wide- eyed wonder. Or was it fear? Uncertainty? His breathing was heavy, and he was moaning, though. He'd tell me if he was real-life scared, right? I pulled his leather jacket off. Leaned down between his legs and started to unbuckle his belt. "Have you done this before, baby?"

"In a way," he said. Smirking. "In a way?"

"I can't talk about it." And suddenly, the smirk melted from his face, and he looked so little. "Ma'am … There's a woman I do this with in my dreams."

"In dreams?" I hated that I was repeating everything he said. But I wasn't expecting that from a greaser boy. In dreams? What do I say to that? "Do you touch yourself in these dreams?"

He shuddered. "Sometimes, Ma'am."

So I put my hand on his zipper and stroked. "Show me how you like to do it."

He reached down and started to unzip. But then he froze. Turned over on his side, and curled up into a fetal position. "I need to stop—I'm sorry." I'd never seen him cry before. I was dumbfounded. What had I done? Was this about gender? Sexual assault? Shame? Maybe even just not being horny any more? Swallow your ego, I said to myself. He needs you right now.

"Baby. It's okay. No apologies."

"I—" He blinked. He looked so surprised. "The character's too repressed and fucked up. I'm getting too into it. I feel real-life ashamed." "No worries, Bambino." I pulled him into my arms. "You're so sweet. Honey, you're so good." But what I most wanted, in that moment, was to be told those things myself.

***

I started calling him Bambino after I saw *Murmur of the Heart* for the first time. It's the Louis Malle film about the adventures of a precocious—sexually, intellectually, otherwise—fourteen-year-old boy named Laurent. It's most famous for its frank but somehow uncreepy depiction of incest. The boy has sex with his mother at the end, consensually. He said the boy in the movie was a big influence on him, made an impression when he was first coming into s/m and wanted to cultivate a boy persona. So I felt like I was learning as much about him as I was about the movie when I watched it over salad and pizza one night after class.

"I'm making this movie out to be supererotic," he'd said, "But it's probably not that sexy. I think I just get off on the cocky rich French boy thing." From the first moment, the opening wail of Charlie Parker, where towheaded Laurent and his friend are out on the cobblestoned French streets scamming tourists out of their pocket change by pretending to collect for the Red Cross, I was just riveted. I could not take my eyes off the screen. The boy is called Laurent by his French family, but Venzino by his Italian mother, a gorgeous, doe-eyed woman from a meager background. I read her as a sex worker, even though I'm not sure if that's what Malle intends. She's not whoring in the film, but you get the distinct sense that she married the boy's father for money. That they met under less than proper circumstances. It's a story full of sex and jazz and the intense push/pull between love and resentment. Venzino has a lot of homoerotic encounters with his brothers—not quite sex, and not quite sexy, so they are somehow less shocking than when he and his mother touch each other, but it is still surprising. The sex scene with his mother at the end is so bizarrely normal that you almost forget that it's an incest scene. Except that that's also what gives it a charge, a spark—that they are fundamentally not supposed to desire each other this way, mother and son, teenage boy and middle-aged woman, but they do.

In the movie, Laurent's mother calls him "Venzino" as a pet name, a kind of sweet Italian diminutive of his French name. And it occurred to me that my boy should have a pet name, and for some reason, it was "Bambino." It just was. It's Italian for "baby boy," which seemed perfect. Growing up, it was the nickname I heard my Calabrese grandmother and great-aunts bestow upon all my boy cousins. It also refers to manifestations of the Baby Jesus, which was less perfect. But I liked it, and I started

calling him that, casually. “Bambino, how are you?” “Bambino, fetch that for me.”

It took him a while to ask me what it meant. I’d been calling him Bambino for a couple weeks, and he finally said “Whoa! I just looked up this thing you’re calling me. Are you calling me the little baby Jesus?!!!” This was over an instant message conversation. He put three exclamation points at the end of the sentence, he was that taken aback. “No, no. Sweetie, it’s Italian for ‘little boy.’ I’m calling you a little boy.” And he sent me back a smileyface.

***

He started to change, curled up in my arms. I could feel the desire returning to him—whatever demon he’d wrestled with was floating away. “I want to keep going,” he said. “Maybe we could do something lighter? Just jerk off together? But be the same characters?”

“Of course, honey.”

“No, or maybe. I mean.” He was talking fast, now, I could see the wheels in his head spinning. “I mean, do you want me to fuck you?”

“I … I mean, if you want to, I’d love that.”

“Okay. Maybe we can do that, as long as you’re running it, showing me how.” He smiled big. “I really want to, Mama.”

“Mmm.” I kissed his eyelids. “You want to touch me?” He kissed my neck. “Yes.”

“You want to show me how you touch yourself?” And the minute I said it, I regretted it. Fuck. That’s what hurt him before. How could I be so dumb?

But he was reaching for his fly again, saying, “Yes.” He got his jeans down over his hips and ass. Then he crumpled.

“Fuck. I’m sorry. I need to stop.”

“I’m sorry. God, I’m so sorry. I fucked up. Shit.”

So we held each other for the rest of the night. Read each other stories. Ate ice cream. Went to sleep curled up in each other’s arms.

***

We woke up that morning curled around each other like kittens. I

started stroking his hair, absentminded, half-asleep; he stroked my face, and suddenly, everything felt electric again. My hands were all over him in

a flash. He rolled over onto his belly, grinding his hips into my sheets and sighing as I raked my nails over his back. “I—you really wanna do this?” I was still gun-shy from the night before. I couldn’t believe I was back-pedaling out of sex with someone I was so hot for, but I wanted to make sure. “Honestly, I didn’t intend to be Evil Molesting Mommy and fuck you awake …”

“No, it’s my favorite way to wake up. Please don’t stop.”

I didn’t need to be told twice. “Do you want me in the back or the front hole?”

“The front, please.”

“Do you want my hands or my cock?”

“Your cock, *please*.” That edge in his voice, so full of desire it was hoarse, guttural.

I slipped into my strap-on so fast I fumbled with it. I fumbled when I fucked him, too—I’m short, and he was tall, and balancing on my knees behind him on the bed was hard. After I slipped out the third time, I couldn’t help it, I started giggling.

“What’s funny?” He moaned.

“My dick keeps slipping out of you from this angle. Can you turn over, pretty? Or can we bend you over the bed?”

“No, I wanna be on my belly.” “Then I need to use my hands.”

“Anything, just don’t stop, please, Mama.”

He came fast around my fingers, snarling and pounding the mattress while I told him how good he was, how hot he was, how much I loved fucking him. I pulled out, pulled the glove off, pulled him close to me. I was so wet; I wanted him to touch me so bad. I leaned in to kiss him, and he stilled. He looked close to crying again.

“I’m sorry. I’m not doing well. I’m sorry. It’s just hard sometimes, getting fucked fucks with my sense of myself, and I feel like less of a boy, and I’m sorry, I want to touch you, but …”

So I held him while he broke again. Fought to urge to say I love you. “Baby. It’s okay.”

***

Sometimes I felt guilty, needy for wanting that affection. *He says we’re just casual*. *Do I get to want that*? *He’s a big kid*, *I can ask and he can say no*, *but what if even asking is too much*? *Is that pressure*? *Pushing*? I’d

daydream, and then I'd feel greedy for being daydreamy. I'd want little presents from him, the kind of gifts you buy for someone because you see or hear something and it makes you think of them—a notebook with a pretty cover, a small stuffed snail with pink antennae, a mix CD. Sometimes I wanted big presents, too—a new knife, tickets to see Patti Smith when she came into town that October. Sometimes I wanted the Lloyd Dobler moment—him standing outside my window in the rain, boombox above his head, grinning about me.

And sometimes, I just wanted him near me. I wanted him to come over with popcorn and a movie at 9 o'clock on a Sunday night when I'd had a terrible week. But I didn't ask. I didn't ask, because he'd said he needed to cool down and he could only see me once a month and we had to be more casual, because he was overwhelmed, but he'd still text and email me all the time, we'd have phone dates, he'd say, over and over, how honored, privileged, amazed he was to be in my life. Where was I in his life, though? He called himself my friend as well as my lover, but he wasn't the kind of friend I could rely on when I was having a bad day. He wasn't the kind of friend I could call and ask to come over the awful day I ran into my rapist at a poetry reading, I came home to a letter that said I didn't get the big grant I applied for, and then my septic system exploded when I tried to take a hot shower. My close friends could do that for me—my best friend, with a girlfriend and friends and a busy life, she made time to come over that night with ice cream and hugs and an offer to take a bubble bath in her tub. Why couldn't someone I was ostensibly dating do that, too?

***

We both took showers. Studied at a café together, split a piece of ginger-pear bread while I tried to write a response paper for my evening class, and he worked on his zine. We took a walk to the Mission Library after. I was so pent up, with sadness and lust and this feeling of missing him even though he was right in front of me. "I …" I finally said, "I … still feel really sexual." Why did it feel so naked, saying what I wanted? I got to want things, right? "I have go home to Oakland," he said. He looked embarrassed. For himself or for me?

At the library, I borrowed a random DVD of *Arrested Development*, and he borrowed another Louis Malle movie. We hugged awkwardly at the BART train. My apartment is only a five-minute walk from BART; I was

crying before I got through my front door. I collapsed into my bed, sobbing, and eventually reaching for my vibrator. I cried and jerked off and cried while I jerked off, thinking about all the things I wanted to do with him, all the places I wanted him to touch me that he hadn't.

Thinking about every question that was left hanging on my tongue. *What did I do*? *Why did he go away*? *Am I too much*? *I just want a place in his life*. *I just want to matter*.

I went to my evening class, exhausted, rings around my eyes, questions still ringing in my head. I could barely focus in class, didn't hear a word anyone said. I couldn't wait to get home. I thought about calling him the minute I got in the door. I decided to send a text and watch *Arrested Development* instead. "bambino, i'm feeling a spot of top drop. can you reassure me i'm only evil in good ways?" Of course every minute he didn't respond made me feel worse than before. Maybe the text wasn't a good idea.

I put on my pink lights and my softest pajamas, put the DVD on my laptop, and sett back into a cocoon of blankets. I just wanted something silly to take my mind off my day, something to watch while I collapsed. The first episode on the DVD was called "Motherboy XXX"—about a mother/son bonding dance. I laughed, hard, for the first time all day, but it was the kind of laughter that verged on tears. I didn't wanna start crying again. I pulled my blankets even tighter around myself as the credits rolled. My cat took pity on me. She let me press my face into her fur like she was a pillow, curled up around my head. She purred even louder and licked my face. Everything I could do to feel held that night, I did.

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“I love erotica. I love writing erotic scenes. It really exposes the individual. And when I’m writing, I’m not writing just purely for the sake of erotica. There’s something you learn something about the characters through that interaction.”

-Jerome Dickey
(*in conversation with Farai Chideya*)

Holly Zwalf

Bio

Holly Zwalf is from Sydney, Australia, but recently spent eight months living in San Francisco writing a PhD about queer leather Mommies. She sorely misses sunbathing at the gay beach in Dolores Park with a burnt sugar Bi-Rite ice cream melting in her hand.

Mini-Interview

How did you start writing about sex? How does it differ from non-erotic writing? I find it impossible to leave sex out of my writing, just like I find it impossible to leave sex out of life. Without either, I would be miserable.

Do you write in multiple genres and*, *if so*, *why? I am a smutty spoken word artist, I have a PhD in queer kink, and I have also just written a novel about a maternal masochist who is a nanny by day and a sex worker by night. I figure if you're going to dedicate your life to something, it may as well be something you love.

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I am from Sydney, Australia, but I attended the Erotic Reading Circle while I was living in San Fran and conducting my "research" on the queer kink community. (In other words while I was gadding about the place going to sex parties and dungeons and having a grand old time, at the University's expense). The Circle gave me the opportunity to share my writing in a space where it wouldn't be received as shocking, where my writing would be

valued for its quality and craft, not judged for its confronting or outrageous content.

What's the inside scoop on your story? That dirty weekend away was an emotional journey that covered great distances, and that also somehow took me closer to home. My journey had begun in the red dirt of the central Australian desert, engulfed in grief and lust, and so it was only fitting that it ended hard up against a rusty redwood (being the perverted tourist that I am).A few hours later we stopped at the giant drive-thru tree, and I went to the toilet and discovered the perfect souvenir—bits of redwood crumbled all through my knickers.

A Short Story

Holly Zwalf

She tells me that her lovers have always been two-toned. The most recent, the one we both shared for a brief overlap of time, was baby-powder and engine grease. The one before that, vegan cupcakes and leather. *And me*? I ask. She pauses. She is thoughtful, and I like this because I know that it means I can trust her. *Sea salt and eucalyptus*, she finally says, and then nods as though to settle it—*yes*, *that's it*. *That's you*.

She takes me away for four days, north to the redwoods. At lunchtime we stop for oysters, two dozen of them safe in their shells that we pry open and suck dry, like thirsty men at the pub after a long Sunday spent in church. I have always maintained that oysters are like orgasms, but these are different. These are like another's, not your own, a movement in three parts—the sweetness of a beginning, the salty crescendo, and last, the tenderness of a body gone limp in your arms. That is how these treasures taste: fresh, alive, complex.

The first night we camp, drinking red wine in plastic cups and hanging our bums over the flames of the strange eco-friendly faux wood logs to keep warm. Beside us the river is slow and silver under a full moon, and a small black cat from the farm house slinks around chasing shadows. The tent is cold but we are new lovers, and new lovers don't pay attention to the weather. After we have finished the cat scratches to be let in, so I unzip the fly and she crawls in between us, and it almost feels like home.

It rains in the night and by morning I am getting a cold, so I no longer feel guilty that we have booked a cabin for the next two nights. We spend a lazy day driving through the Californian fog, emerging occasionally beside a rugged cliff or a mock-chateau winery, sniffing the reds as though we can afford more than just the one lower-end bottle. The vineyards and the European-style buildings help me to forget where I am. Some of them are reminiscent of the southern parts of France, some the Swiss Alps, others perfect replicas of quaint English cottages. America has the knack of combining three or four different cultures in the one moment, a nostalgic nod to its European roots, perhaps, or an unashamed attempt to import a sense of timeless history into a young (in white terms) land. I am in search of a nice port. I have aspirations to drink it by the fire in our log cabin in the woods, or in the hot tub that we have been told nestles romantically in the

trees, surrounded by fairy lights and tranquillity. However as night falls so does the rain, and when we arrive the fire is a fake gas flame and the hot tub is broken, so we drink the port out of Ikea tumblers in the tiny oval bathtub, our bodies stuck together out of sheer necessity, my back against her stomach, knees and elbows protruding awkwardly. Only our bums and cunts are properly submerged in the warm water.

The next day there is sun, plentiful and strong. We set up our camping stove on the verandah and cook pancakes, flipping them over with a knife, and afterwards we wander across to the beach. At the top of the cliff we stop. The sun is hot on my arms and below us the ocean is thrashing around madly in the wake of last night's storm, like a three- headed monster with too many elbows and legs. I watch the waves pounding the sand and imagine that force inside me, heaving, thrusting, surging. I am beginning to understand what Annie Sprinkle means by eco-sexuality—today I want the whole world to fuck me. I tell my lover this and she takes the hint, and when we get down onto the sand she takes *me*, swiftly, suavely, my arse resting on a piece of bony driftwood as I face the roiling water, watching it crest over the rocks in a rush as I cum in much the same way. This is the closest I get to religion, sharing my orgasms with the sky.

We save the redwoods for the last day. Mid-morning we stop for an impromptu picnic in between one tourist attraction and the next, and after eating she leads me off into the trees, her hemp rope coiled around one arm. This is why we came here; this is the reason for our trip. We find the perfect spot: a young shaggy trunk, straight and slim, stretching confidently beside a stream. She ties my hands above my head and then slowly coils the rope around both my chest and the tree, looping intricate knots around each breast, the rope binding me firmly against the crumbling bark like a hug. As I am gradually restrained I try to match my breathing to hers as she has taught me, fighting the panic inside. The noise of the road disappears and I disappear along with it. I hand myself over and let go.

She unbuckles my belt and tugs my jeans down around my knees, wriggling her hand under the elastic of my knickers. I am painfully aware that if someone walked by she would not have enough time to untie me. I also do not care. She fucks me, fast and then slow, and unlike on the beach *this* orgasm is gathered up from all around, held tight, and then flung out wide like handfuls of water sparkling in the sun. When I stop shuddering I remember where I am and I am suddenly overcome. I can't stop laughing, I

feel like I am on acid, I feel like I have transcended, I feel like there are wings thrumming the air, just out of sight. I forget about history and futures and sums that don't add up, and for a moment I believe in something bigger.

When we drive through the grand finale, the Avenue of the Giants where the largest of the redwoods reside, it is late afternoon and the sunlight slats diagonally through the leaves in golden bars. In the deepest part there is a stillness that is overwhelming. The air feels so calm, so solid, so sure. No wars, no famines, no heartbreaks have ever touched this peace. I suppose this is what two thousand years of growing upwards will do to you. Despite the sunshine a chill invades us, and I seek refuge in the heat of her mouth. She draws me in to the shadows of a partially-hollowed trunk and slides her fingers inside me, and instead I find myself shivering on her palm.

We drive home with some of this silence still spun like fairy floss between us. We drive into the night, the dense emptiness parting on either side of our headlights and closing back in around us at the boot. This country thinks it is the centre of the universe, but I have begun to understand. This is a country where the lights are so bright that nighttime is a myth, where the moon is obscured by a neon sign. How can you remember your place in the universe when you've drowned out all of the stars? But tonight there are no stars. Instead there is a storm waiting in the wings, clouds obscuring all chance at navigation, no way of telling which is up or down, which is sea or land, which is solid or only a shadow. I am delirious in this newfound anonymity, floating oblivious past the unseen alien landscape, alone at last in this over-populated, over-consuming, over-suspicious country. But she has started to panic—I can tell by the shortness of her breath. She is from a place where the roads are lit by the houses which flank it, where roads don't connect towns but connect houses to cities, where you cannot drive for longer than a breath without sharing it with a hundred others. And I am from a place where the distance between homes can mean the distance between new lovers at the moment when they realise it won't last; I am from a country where the distance between us and the rest of the world means that we can forget our humanity and turn away those who seek it. And it's lonely, but apparently it's safe.

As we are slowly embraced by the outstretched fingers of a glowing San Francisco I leave my sense of home behind me in the dark. Soon the road is flanked not by trees but by my fellow homeless—the needy and the

maimed—lining the streets like an assembly of war memorials come to life, though one would hardly call it living. Theirs is a hopelessness that could rival the homeless orphans of Cambodia, though at least in Cambodia it's always summer. Apparently the great American dream is only viable if you have somewhere warm to sleep, somewhere safe to dream it. And this is not my dream.

They say that love knows no borders, but mine is eucalyptus and sea salt, and hers? Hers is the metallic tang of the Golden Gate, the rust of an ancient redwood. And I am trying to work out how to tell her when she says, *hey*, *are we cool*? and I no longer know how to answer. I like her, this butch with her feminist convictions, her romantic plans and her filthy mind. I like her so much but it makes no difference, not when you've closed down the borders of your heart. We sit there together in the dark with the gearstick and my history between us, crawling through the tragic streets. Her thick tough-boy fingers tremble against the steering wheel and I want to open the door and get out, but we are moving too fast. Eventually we pull up at my house. I look into her chameleon eyes as though for an answer, but of course all I find are more questions. *What are we going to do*? I ask no one in particular as I get out of the car. *Make me into a good short story*, she says.

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Carol Queen

Bio

Carol Queen is a widely-published author of erotica, memoir, essays, and sex information. She is the founding director of the Center for Sex & Culture (sexandculture.org) where she co- facilitates the Erotic Reading Circle with Jen Cross; she also facilitated the ERC throughout the 1990s when it was held at Good Vibrations and edited the first anthology of ERC stories, *Sex Spoken Here*, with Jack Davis. More about CQ at www.carolqueen.com.

Mini-Interview

How is the Erotic Reading Circle part of your writing process? I have way too little time to write as much as I'd like, but whenever I work on something new, I immediately take it to the Circle. I receive loving and honest feedback and it is so valuable and inspirational. I've not done a "regular" writing group, but I think the Circle is so diverse and interesting; it's hard to imagine another group that allows its writers to come from so many different places, on so many different things, and most importantly, come from so many varying levels of experience. It's so amazing to hear a seasoned writer's new work *and* a brand-new writer's first-ever story, all in the span of a couple of hours.

Do you write under your own name? YES. To me, writing is activism, and it takes the point off my spear if I am not willing to stand up and speak for my work and for the change I want it to create in the world. If I were concerned about doing this work, I don't think I'd be able to do it—on the

contrary, it's an honor to be able to lend my thoughts, my time, and my name to trying to make a more sex-positive world.

What's the inside scoop on your story? Sometimes when you have a big crush, you try to turn it into something more; sometimes (like this time), you just let it transmute into the raw material for a story. This piece works out not only my fondness for a certain person, but also some of the many feelings I have about the Interwebs.

Mirror in the Machine

Carol Queen

I've never gotten all the way to page 33 when I googled somebody before. This is really a first. I actually do so much less google-fact-finding than most people—the way I understand it, anyhow, the way things have gone since I was a pup, or even *dating*, which in my case should always have been called "fucking new people," pretty much everybody now seeks all earthly knowledge about each other via the infinite number of Ones on the magic eight-ball search engine. Bosses stalk their new hires and moms stalk their daughters' fiances. Boys and girls dream about Mr. Right, or Mr. Right Now, or alternatively Princess Charming or the right sugarbutch. And self-esteem is sized by how many page views each one of us commands. As my favorite columnist Jon Carroll has said, "You can, of course, google yourself—but you may not like the results"; of course, that's true of any search for truth, isn't it? And the glowing box on my lap that has in it all the information in the world, providing I can divine the right search words to find it, our new eon's answer to the name by which to call a demon or a magic decoder ring—it's chock full of truth and everything else besides, tells me everything about you, I think, except how your first kiss would taste. And I can set my subconscious to dream about that, in fact I have, so I already know.

And of course there's the alchemy-inflected secret skill of reading between the lines on each others' Facebook pages—and thank god you friended me back, so at least I feel like I've reached the door to the temple.

What does all this mean? One, that I haven't been this interested in anybody since dinosaurs ruled the earth. No, since the paradigm changed. Because I had a crush this hot ten years ago—was it fifteen?—and in those days secret knowledge was gained by triangulating with your other lovers, watching who you liked and who liked you, fitting yourself in like a puzzle piece. And before that it was Robert, I think that happened in the old-fashioned way, just meeting, falling desperately in lust, letting love follow right on its heels like a puppy that has to go where the old dog does because that's how it learns and besides, it's afraid of being lonely.

But you, I met your work before I ever knew your name, zapping electronically into my cortex and beginning to seed and flower there. I think this might be a new way to find the people we're supposed to know, but

maybe it's only a coincidence, a distraction, a haze over the landscape from a fire that was burning already. Maybe, too, this is just as starfucky as I have ever gotten. Anyway, it suddenly seemed important, very important, to google you, and now I have learned several new things about you, and I'm only up to page 33, and there are 864,000 results, so it seems as though this project will continue. Clearly I haven't wanted to know someone the way I want to know you since the computer gave us the opportunity to see a person sliced sushi-thin and laid out forever, each bit transparent, adding up to everything if only you find that all the links are live.

And even with all that info sizzling on the superhighway like a mirage cooking on the asphalt—well, it *is* a mirage, isn't it? I accumulate bits of knowledge. I try to find holes and things that fit into holes, like tinkertoys expanding out into a shape I can recognize. No, it's more like stacking the facts up into a house of cards. I don't know what's foundational. I don't know which of these bits of data you would even consider true. You do have a wiki page, and the skeleton of what I know about you is there, but where is the spirit that animates the bones of your life? And if all that's onscreen are dead words, why have I even bothered to get to page 33?

Also, you have a common name and I have to sift and winnow down each line listed for me on each page to see if it's you at all. I already found all the surrealism I expected plus some that is just universal bonus, the great laughter of the stars asking me whether my love is true enough to tell you apart from the woman who cut her daughter's arms off to devote her to God, and the man whose night in a motel with two hookers started out just great, *until* …

I can tell you apart from all of them, mostly. I see obituaries for you on every page and I know you're not dead; that's comforting, given that I hope one day to drift off to sleep with two of your fingers still hooked into my cunt, my hand on your heart. I can see your shaved head but not, however, anything that tells me whether I will be met more happily by you if I myself am shaved. You brilliant children today, you shave everything, don't you? How would I know this? Why do I think I believe it?

So far I'm not clear whether you like to fuck or be fucked, dance or watch the dance—both, I think, I think you go both ways about everything, but maybe that's only because I do, only me looking for a mirror in the machine and pretending I found one in you.

You make your own mirrors, I think; you like the space under water, not, apparently, associating it with the world of the drowned. You're not emailing me back fast enough, but you sent me a picture and used the word *love* with it. We who will not be colonized by love use that word in so many ways, like a spice, a gift, a vow, even just a flirt, maybe even a flirt we don't intend ever to ignite. I wonder whether one of these googled pages will tell me what that word means to you. Also whether you fuck boys or girls. Also whether you fuck people younger than you, or older. Because I *am* older, and I always will be, won't I?

And this brings me to Complication Number One. I'm so glad that "It's complicated" is now an option for us to use to define our relationship status, because it always has been complicated, and I believe, thinking backward, that I have always wanted it to be this way: I have never wanted it simple when I could have it involved, even involuted, spiraled around like a shell or the universe. In that sense you are perfect, this is perfect. But I have seen someone like me recently, older than she used to be, fall in lust, be caught in a crush, and it was like she dropped her panties on the bus, not on purpose, her dignity lost up her cunt, teetering and without any footing. Inside, where I have for quite a long time stayed still like an animal frozen in the grass, not sure if I'm rabbit or fox or, in fact, a cougar waiting to come out of her cave, inside I feel the heat of that welling-up of desire. The gratitude. The whispered admission that I was not sure how much more of this I was in line for. I'm afraid of it, really. Of course I want it, but to tip over and have everything spill out?

That assumes that it *would* spill. Is there a time when all the contents of my desire, everything stacked up like a Jell-O parfait with colors and textures matched like my mom's old pastel pantsuits, will jell? Will hold together and not moistly crack open and apart like the heart's own earthquake? Lust and connection, the hormonal roil of new love, even the love that isn't capital-L, first act of the drama, expectation starting to bubble like the soup you can't afford to burn? If I can pray for that time to have arrived, and really what else would I work up enough ego to pray for—a state of grace where I can hope for humility enough to float desire there on the pond whose waters you retreat under, humility enough to avoid humiliation if the boat casts the wrong shadow on the ripples you go underneath to watch. I can't even swim, so your water thing? It is the biggest mystery to me.

Are you down there for the light and the vision change? Are you there to block out almost all the sound of the surface world? Are you there because you like to flirt with drowning, or need to, or are just waiting to be taken? That's what love is, to me. It's what love has been. I don't know, in fact, what it is now. Here's my blood: the last time it burned, a chemist could have filtered out hormones at a titer high enough to drop in the reservoir and turn the whole city on. That's what I wanted, trying to drip it out on the page when I wrote about fucking, hot enough to sink through your skin like LSD if your fingers touched the words. I wanted to blur the people together into a shimmering electric band of fuck, gleaming across the city the way the Northern Lights color the sky.

Now who am I? Am I that woman who ignited when strangers stared at her? Or have these years away from the game caused the lushly- felt rush of adrenaline to dry to a trickle? Is my buzz too depleted to catch?

The only way I can find out, I think, is to lay myself out in front of eyes. That's *my* flirtation with death, the way I win another lease on life, another rush. And really the only set of eyes that interest me now are yours. I'm not sure whether either one of us has to take this too seriously; I'm not sure whether I take it more or less seriously than I did when I was in my 20s and thought the person making my blood zip was the only person worth impressing. I think it doesn't matter, in the end, whether this is a crush or the needle on my compass finally, finally moving.

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Starting Your Own Erotic Reading Circle

Jen Cross

The Erotic Reading Circle was developed in the early days of Good Vibrations in San Francisco before being taken on by the *Center for Sex & Culture*, where it is facilitated by CSC founder Dr. Carol Queen and Jennifer Cross (founder of *Writing Ourselves Whole*).

If you wish you had an Erotic Reading Circle in your area, the easiest way to get one might be to form one yourself. To aid you in that endeavor, we've put together this list of considerations for the care and feeding of a healthy Erotic Reading Circle:

- The Circle should be a place where all kinds of erotic writing are received with the same energy and celebration. People can read anything they like, their own work or someone else's. "Non- judgmental listening is guaranteed" means people will be asked to *not* speak hostilely or negatively of anyone's work—we practice giving a wide range of feedback without shaming or cutting anyone's work down.
- At the beginning of the meeting, we give a brief introduction and welcome to the Circle, state our intentions for the space and our time limits on readings. Then we go around the circle and introduce ourselves. This is how we do introductions at the Erotic Reading Circle in San Francisco: we say our name (sometimes folks give a pseudonym for the night), say the town/neighborhood where we woke up, say what our preferred pronoun is, and then respond to some sort of ice breaker—like a favorite dirty word, a favorite erotic writer, or a favorite piece of erotic writing. (Why do we ask about preferred pronouns? Our San Francisco Circle meets in a community that is fairly queer and genderfluid, so we ask for folks to give a third person pronoun that is right for them, so that we don't make any assumptions about a writer's gender identity. Common third-person pronouns include he, she, they, and sie or ze.)
- We ask for about a 10-minute time limit on readings, so that as many folks can read as possible—a 20-minute piece has taken up nearly 45 minutes of Circle time, with feedback and conversation! Ask someone

to contact you ahead of time if they have a long piece to read; you might choose to make that reading a special feature one night.

• Cultivate and model a commitment to safe space for all kinds of voices, all writing abilities, and work at all stages of development.

• Listen attentively to one another's readings and offer clear and specific feedback. Some of us will take notes, jotting down specific phrases that are especially strong for us. Encourage and model respect for all participants: turn off cell phones; don't text/Tweet/ Facebook/email during the Circle, and please don't talk while someone else is reading.

• Work shared in the Circle can be polished or a first draft: we honor it all, and if anyone wants to have feedback, we first tell them what we liked about the piece. (Pat Schneider, of Amherst Writers & Artists, says that folks have no business criticizing a piece of writing if they can't also describe what they liked or found powerful about the piece.) People desiring constructive criticism/editorial feedback can ask for that as well. If writers have specific sorts of feedback they are looking for, we ask them to tell us that—are they concerned, for instance, about the dialogue or descriptions, or whether the acrobatics of the sex is believable, or whether anyone else finds the piece hot? Sometimes people don't have specific questions—they are open to any responses. When offering "critical" feedback, we continue to model respect: we make I-statements ("I wasn't sure what was going on here" versus "That part was totally confusing!") and talk about places where we were pulled out of the story or felt confused. We try not to make blanket statements or offer wholesale criticism of a piece or a writer. We respond to the words of the narrator of the story rather than assuming the story is the personal experience of the reader (saying, "I liked when the narrator spoke of their desire for …" versus "Wow, I didn't know you were into that!"). Remember that each person's response is simply an individual opinion and not a judgment from on high; we can be direct and honest with one another without being harsh or unkind.

• We try to keep feedback to around five minutes per person, again so that there's enough time for as many people to read as possible.

• The facilitator's job is to send out monthly reminders about the event; spread the word; arrive early to set up the space; open the Circle and welcome folks into the room; invite readers to share; ask for appropriate

feedback; watch the time and give a heads up if someone has gone well over the time limit; keep the Circle moving (redirect conversation back to the writing at hand when necessary, for instance); welcome new members; encourage a culture of generosity and respect; close the meeting on time; clean up. The facilitator doesn't have to do all this alone, however! Get help from volunteers or your co-facilitators.

• Pick a date and time for your Circle that will remain consistent from month to month—we've been meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month for nearly 10 years now! We meet once a month for two hours, and usually have time for 8 to 10 readers. The facilitators will read if there's time.

• Get the word out! Put up flyers in the community, post an ad on your local Craigslist calendar, send a blurb to your independent local weekly newspaper and other event calendars, create an event on Facebook or Meetup.com. In any advertisements, include relevant details: time and place, a brief description, requested donation or fee, time limits on readings and content restrictions i(f you have them). Include an email, phone number, and/or website where folks can get more information. Advertise widely and consistently, so as to encourage a diversity of voices and writing styles.

• Consider making water or tea available, as well as some small snacks, like nuts or cookies—sharing new writing in front of strangers is hungry work!

• You might ask for a donation to cover the cost of food, space rental, supplies, and so forth; consider also offering a no one turned away for lack of funds (NOTAFLOF) option so that all can attend.

• As you get established, you might consider meeting informally at a nearby coffee shop or restaurant before or after the Circle, so that folks can get to know each other better, talk more generally about their writing, ask questions and share resources, pass on calls for submissions or other publishing opportunities, and in other ways deepen the Circle's supportive community.

• Now and again, the Circle members might want to share their work more broadly. We have hosted readings and put together anthologies to share the breadth and power of the work read at our Erotic Reading Circle.

• Consider making calls for submissions available to Circle participants, or copies of the magazines or journals that accept work with erotic or sexual content. You might also bring copies of books about how to write erotic stories such as some of those listed in the bibliography.

• Find a meeting location that's easily accessible and private, a space where folks can have their words held in confidence without worrying that passersby might overhear. A private home is okay if you feel comfortable inviting the public into your space—otherwise, consider asking about space at a local college or university (the women's center, gender studies department, queer student union or other student spaces may have space available). You might have a sex-positive boutique with meeting space that you could partner up with; community organizations or independent bookstores might be a great fit for your new venture, too. Don't forget to consider other accessibility issues—is the space accessible to folks in wheelchairs? Will those with chemical sensitivities be able to participate? Will the place feel welcoming to folks from varying backgrounds?

• Let it be okay for folks to come in and just listen without reading anything.

• You might choose to have content restrictions on the material shared at your Circle. We have not chosen to institute any content restrictions and we don't ask writers to censor themselves. Some Circles have indicated to their participants that they don't want material with characters who are under the age of 18, or that contains anything appearing to be nonconsensual, or that deals with bestiality, etc. Make the decision that's right for your Circle. If you do institute content restrictions, let your participants know about them ahead of time, so that readers can make an informed decision about what they bring to the Circle.

• Consider having two or three facilitators/hosts for your Circle, folks who show up regularly and are reliable—it helps to share the responsibility, and it's useful to have folks to cover when someone is sick or out of town.

• Be consistent, meet at the same time at the same place every month, collect contact information so you can send out monthly email reminders—and watch your gorgeous creative erotic community grow.

These suggestions grow out of what has worked for us, and for others we know who have begun their own Circles elsewhere. What's at the core of these spaces is the intention to create safer space for writers to share their erotic work, space in which that writing will be celebrated and respected. Take what works, then incorporate your own innovations and Circle-y creativity. Remember that mistakes and stumbles are par for the course when one is co-creating any cultural/creative space. Try to be as generous with yourself/yourselves as you are with the folks whose writing you celebrate—and don't forget to let us know about your Circlings! Good luck, have fun, and go change the world!

Further reading for those intrepid readers seeking inspiration for their own writing and circling:

Elizabeth Benedict, *The Joy of Writing Sex*: *A guide for fiction writers*. Holt and Co., 2002.

Susie Bright, *How to Write a Dirty Story: Reading, Writing, and Publishing Erotica*. Touchstone Press, 2002.

Circlet Press Collective, *The Erotic Writer's Market Guide: Advice, Tips, and Market Listings for the Aspiring Professional Erotica Writer*. Circlet Press, 2006.

M. Christian, *The Burning Pen: Sex Writers on Sex Writing*. Alyson Books, 2001.

Audre Lorde, *Sister/Outsider*. The Crossing Press, 1984. Includes the essay "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power."

Carol Queen and Jack Davis, *Sex Spoken Here: Good Vibrations Erotic Reading Circle Selections.* Down There Press, 1997.

Michael Rowe, *Writing Below the Belt: Conversations with Erotic Authors*. Masquerade Books, Inc., 1995.

Pat Schneider, *Writing Alone and With Others*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

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About the Center for Sex & Culture

The *Center for Sex & Culture* was founded in 2001 by erotic writer, essayist, lecturer and sexologist Dr. Carol Queen and Dr. Robert Morgan Lawrence, a sex educator who holds double doctorates and has been in the field for 38 years.

The space itself is a non-profit community center that hosts events, classes and parties ranging across topics related to sexuality, gender and sex education. It is an internationally significant model that makes sex educational resources available outside of an academic or specialized institution.

CSC is also home to a gallery and huge archive and library of sex-related materials. The materials range from academic journals and papers to what has been called the largest erotic zine library in the world, to pulp and porn from the 1950s through the present. The *Center for Sex & Culture* is entirely powered by a volunteer board of directors, staff volunteers, interns and fiscal support from philanthropic institutions and committed and kind individuals.

This is the second publication in 2014 from of the newly formed *Center for Sex & Culture Press*. More publications coming soon!

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Thanks for reading our book. We hope you are inspired! If you enjoyed it, won't you please take a moment to leave us a review at your favorite retailer? Word of mouth is the most important factor in helping a book be discovered by new readers. And remember, all proceeds from this book support the *Center for Sex & Culture*.

Thanks!
Carol, Jen, and Amy
co-editors of *Sex Still Spoken Here*